Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

MIRACLES OF SCIENCE!

The Making of Another Moon!

NUMEROUS legends almost as old as the human race represent that the earth once had two moons. Have you ever heard of the Sect of Two Moons? They were the sorcerers of China and were the greatest scientists this world had ever produced. Talk of modern progress—our arts and sciences, our discoveries and inventions are child's play beside the accomplishments of this race of Chinese devils. Shut away in that remote interior—in a valley so little heard of that it is almost mythical—beyond trackless deserts and the loftiest mountains on the globe—this terrible sect of sorcerers has been growing in power for thousands of years, storing up secret energy that some day should inundate the world with horrors such as never had been known.

Crammed With Action

This novel narrates the sensational attempt of a group of Chinese scientists to obtain rulership of the world by a tremendous threat against the very existence of the earth. The diabolical methods by which they put their scheme into execution, the frantic race across the ocean to circumvent them, the weird and exciting adventures that befell, make one of the most gripping and fascinating novels ever written.

And Other Stories

In addition to this full-length novel, we are also including in this book three shorter stories by well-known authors—thrilling weird stories that appeared in early issues of WEIRD TALES:

OOZE, by Anthony M. Rud, *tells of a biologist who removed the growth limitations from an amoeba, and the amazing catastrophe that ensued.*

PENELOPE, by Vincent Starrett, *is a fascinating tale of the star Penelope, and the fantastic thing that happened when the star was in perihelion.*

AN ADVENTURE IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION, by Farnsworth Wright, *is an uproarious skit on the four-dimensional theories of the mathematicians, and interplanetary stories in general.*

A Superb Book

Order your copy today! You will enjoy reading this book.

If your bookdealer doesn't carry this book in stock, have him order it for you, or, mail the coupon to us and we will send the book direct to you postage prepaid.

Weird Tales, Book Dept. M-21,
840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

Enclosed find $1.50 for cloth-bound copy of THE MOON TERROR.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XIV NUMBER 5

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1928, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States, $3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1929, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for November, 1929

Cover Design ..... **C. C. Senf**

Illustrating a scene in "The Gray Killer"

The Eyrie **580**

A chat with the readers

The Gray Killer ..... **Everil Worrell** **584**

Through the wards of a hospital slithered a strange, horrifying creature, carrying shocking death to his victims

The Roc Raid ..... **George B. Tuttle** **600**

A fascinating story of aviation and gigantic birds of prey, released from the bowels of the earth by a great earthquake

The Nightmare Tarn ..... **Clark Ashton Smith** **624**

Verse

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

The Curse of Yig ---------- **Zealia Brown Reed** **625**
A blood-chilling rattlesnake story—a thrilling weird tale of Indian superstition and American pioneers

The House Without a Mirror ---------- **Seabury Quinn** **637**
Another strange adventure of Jules de Grandin—a tale of weird surgery and a grisly revenge

The Haunted Lake ---------- **A. Leslie** **658**
Verse

Skull-Face (Part 2) ---------- **Robert E. Howard** **659**
An astounding three-part serial story of London's Limehouse quarter and a dire threat against humanity

Death-Gate ---------- **Monroe D. McGibeny** **673**
Verse

The Tailed Man of Cornwall ---------- **David H. Keller** **674**
Another whimsical weird story about Cecil, son of James, Overlord of Cornwall

Scarlatti's Bottle ---------- **August W. Derleth** **680**
A brief story of poison and mediaeval revenge, in the days of the Borgias—a grim little tale

Whispering Death ---------- **John Impola** **683**
Over the telephone wires came a weird whisper, and the listener froze to the receiver as the death sound rose

Thrice Dead ---------- **Alston Lovejoy** **694**
Over the corpse was said a weird ritual, and as the words were intoned, life and motion crept into the dead man's body

The Bed by the Window ---------- **E. F. Benson** **699**
From the Present he looked into the gruesome Future and witnessed a shocking murder

Mummy ---------- **Kelsey Percival Kitchel** **706**
He robbed the grave of its tenant, and eery disaster dogged his steps—a tale of South America

Weird Story Reprint:

Lindenborg Pool ---------- **William Morris** **711**
Ghastly forms mocked the good priest as he performed the last sacrament for the monstrous Thing in the bed

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
HARLEY L. WARD, INC., Mgr.
360 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, Central 6269

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
Flatiron Building
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Algonquin 8328

THE EYRIE

WRITES Lester Anderson, of Hayward, California: "WEIRD TALES keeps on holding your interest, though a lot of themes have been repeated too often, especially those dealing with giant apes and mysterious jungles, ghostly beings, etc. The scientific story is preferred, with real *weird* tales, those that do not incorporate time-worn plots, coming next. In this group the outstanding stories published lately are that weird trio: *Bimini, The Death Touch,* and *The Shadow Kingdom.* Edmond Hamilton's unique tale of *Outside the Universe* has an epic sweep to it that puts it in a class by itself. Here are my suggestions for reprints: *The Brain in the Jar, Lukundoo,* and *The Lure of Atlantis.*"

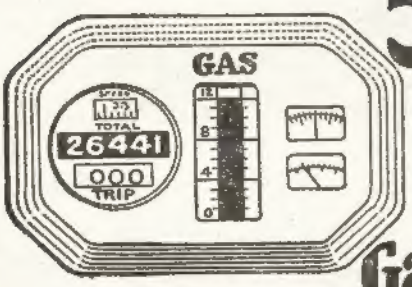
Miss Helen Aiken, of Altoona, Pennsylvania, writes to the Eyrie: "May I say that of late your magazine has improved quite considerably? I am a constant reader of WEIRD TALES and especially do I enjoy all of Mr. Seabury Quinn's narratives of the adventures of Jules de Grandin and 'friend Trowbridge'. What has happened to Greye La Spina? Tell him that there is at least one reader who wonders what has become of him and is anxious for his return."

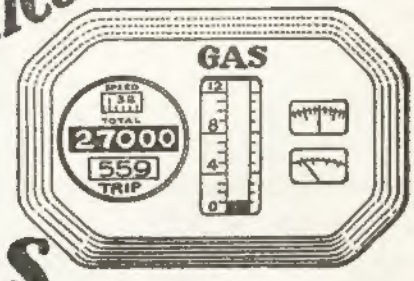
"Your magazine for August is perfect," writes Leroy Price, of Hollywood, California. "It is my only recreational reading. *The Inn of Terror* beats everything to date, bar none."

Mrs. Lilla Price Savino, of Portsmouth, Virginia, writes: "Having taken quite an interest in the controversy over Monsieur de Grandin, I would like to offer a word in favor of our dapper little friend and his up-and-fighting daddy, Mr. Quinn—or is it Doctor Quinn? I would like to ask the reader who fired that missile at brother Quinn what difference it makes whether Monsieur de Grandin overcomes the powers of evil with 'the toe-nail of a saint' or a quill from Gabriel's wing? Just so he overcomes them and the story ends happily why criticize the author so unkindly? My mother's old black 'mammy' once spoke a word of solid truth to Grandmother after lingering in the nursery to hear the end of a fairy-tale read to the children. Mammy Sally said: 'Lordy, honey, us growed-up chilluns sets jes' as much store by dem fairy-tales

(Continued on page 583)

Over the Mountains from Los Angeles 559 Miles on 11 Gallons of GAS





Think of it! FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE MILES over rough mountainous country burning only ELEVEN GALLONS OF GASOLINE. Imagine more than FIFTY MILES to the GALLON. That is what the WHIRLWIND CARBURETING DEVICE does for D. R. Gilbert, enough of a saving on just one trip to more than pay the cost of the Whirlwind.

THE WHIRLWIND SAVES MOTORISTS MILLIONS OF DOLLARS YEARLY

Whirlwind users, reporting the results of their tests, are amazed at the results they are getting. Letters keep streaming into the office telling of mileages all the way from 22 to 59 miles on a gallon, resulting in a saving of from 25% to 50% in gas bills alone.

Mark H. Estes writes: "I was making 17 miles to the gallon on my Pontiac Coupe. Today, with the Whirlwind, I am making 35 5/10 miles to the gallon. Am I glad I put it on? I'll say so!"

P. P. Goersen writes: "I made an actual test both with and without a Whirlwind, getting 13½ miles without and 34 6/10 miles with the Whirlwind, or a gain of 21 miles to the gallon. The longer the Whirlwind is in use on the machine the better the engine runs, has more pep and quicker starting. It makes a new engine out of an old one, and starts at the touch of the starter button."

R. J. Tulp: "The Whirlwind increased the mileage on our Ford truck from 12 to 26 miles to gallon and 25% in speed. We placed another on a Willys-Knight and increased from 12 to 17 miles per gallon."

Arthur Grant: "I have an Oakland touring car that has been giving me 15 miles to the gallon average, but I can see a great difference with the Whirlwind, as it climbs the big hills on high and gives me better than 23 miles to the gallon of gas, which is better than 50% saving in gas."

W. A. Scott: "I had my Whirlwind for three years. Winter and summer it gives the same perfect service, instant starting, smoother running, and what I have saved in gasoline these last few years has brought other luxuries which I could not have afforded previously."

Car owners all over the world are saving money every day with the Whirlwind, besides having better operating motors. Think what this means on your own car. Figure up your savings—enough for a radio—a bank account—added pleasures. Why let the Oil Companies profit by your waste? Find out about this amazing little device that will pay for itself every few weeks in gas saving alone.

FITS ALL CARS

In just a few minutes the Whirlwind can be installed on any make of car, truck or tractor. It's actually less work than changing your oil or putting water in the battery. No drilling, tapping or changes of any kind necessary. It is guaranteed to work perfectly on any make of car, truck or tractor, large or small, new model or old model. The more you drive the more you will save.

SALESMEN AND DISTRIBUTORS WANTED

Free Sample and $100.00 a Week Offer

Whirlwind men are making big profits supplying this fast-selling device that car owners can not afford to be without. Good territory is still open. Free sample offer and full particulars sent on request. Just check the coupon.

WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.
999 101-E. Third Street Milwaukee, Wis.

GUARANTEE

No matter what kind of a car you have—no matter how big a gas eater it is—the Whirlwind will save you money. We absolutely guarantee that the Whirlwind will more than save its cost in gasoline alone within thirty days, or the trial will cost you nothing. We invite you to test it at our risk and expense. You are to be the sole judge.

FREE TRIAL COUPON

WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.,
999 101-E. Third Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

Gentlemen: You may send me full particulars of your Whirlwind Carbureting device and free trial offer. This does not obligate me in any way whatever.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

County _____ State _____

[ ] Check here if you are interested in full or part time salesmen position.

(Continued from page 580)

as dem babies does. We-uns could jes' set an' listen to 'em all night long wid our eyes popped as wide as dem young-uns' eyes.' It is true—we are never too old to enjoy a fairy-tale that is well told, and W. T. has published some very wonderful fairy-tales for 'growed-up chilluns'."

"I am glad to see that you are going to print more stories by Otis Adelbert Kline, as he is my favorite author," writes O. E. Larson, of St. Paul. "I have just finished this author's new book, *The Planet of Peril*, and it certainly is the strangest and most fascinating story I ever read in my life. I've seen a lot of weird creations of authors' imaginations, as I always look for stories of this type, but never anything to equal the creatures that roam in the fern forests of Zorovia, or swim in its rivers and in the fearsome Azpok Ocean."

Howard Griffin, of Mattituck, Long Island, writes to the Eyrie: "Your magazine furnishes a welcome escape from the world of everyday to a new and magical realm peopled with creatures of the imagination. Stories of breath-taking horror, stories with really unusual plots, these are my favorites. I think *The Blue City* by Frank Owen, *He* by H. P. Lovecraft, and the story of a marvelous Persian carpet (I forget the name) by E. Hoffmann Price are admirable examples of this type of fiction. Please print more tales from the pen of Frank Owen—he is splendid. As I have followed WEIRD TALES for only one year, some of your masterpieces such as *The Stranger from Kurdistan*, *The Outsider*, *Lukundoo* and *Whispering Tunnels* have not, unfortunately, been read by me. Whenever I see their strange and suggestive names mentioned by some older and luckier reader, I feel a tinge of jealousy and longing—a desire to read them too. I certainly wish you would publish some of them in the Weird Story Reprint."

K. W. Hill, of Chicago, writes: "I have just read in WEIRD TALES the second story of Kull the King and Brule the Spear-slayer by Robert Howard and wish to express my pleasure in Mr. Howard's writing. His tales have a certain lilt in the telling that one finds in the Harvard Classic translation of the *Odyssey*. More power to you and your very good magazine."

"Just a word of congratulation on your publication," writes Robert Franklyn Henecy. "Your tales are awe-inspiring, fascinating and uncanny. John Horne's story, *The Speared Leopard*, was wonderful."

Robert E. Howard, author of *The Shadow Kingdom*, writes: "I have just been reading the September WEIRD TALES, which blossomed out on the news stands today. I was especially taken with *A Jest and a Vengeance*, by E. Hoffmann Price. I've never been east of New Orleans, but as far as I am concerned Price has captured the true spirit of the East in his tales, just as Kipling did. His stories *breathe* the Orient. In this latest tale I note, as in all his others, that patterned background of beauty for which he is noted. The action is perfectly attuned to the thought of the tale and that thought goes deep. More, through the weaving runs a minor note of diabolical humor, tantalizing and enthralling."

(Continued on page 716)

NEXT MONTH

A wealth of fascinating and unusual stories is scheduled for the December issue of WEIRD TALES, on sale November 1.

The Mystery of the Four Husbands

By Gaston Leroux

A tale of the deadly tali-tali, the poison that kills without leaving a trace; a weird mystery story of a gloriously beautiful woman, her twelve suitors and her four murdered husbands — by the author of *"The Phantom of the Opera".*

Children of Ubasti

By Seabury Quinn

A weird adventure of Jules de Grandin—a tale of a ghoulish pair from northern Africa, who were neither brute nor human, and their fearful depredation.

Behind the Moon

By W. Elwyn Backus

A fascinating weird-scientific serial of eery perils and blood-freezing horrors encountered on the hidden side of the Moon by a party of adventurers from Earth.

The Dancer in the Crystal

By Francis Flagg

From a fallen meteorite came the little crystal with the tiny black spot dancing inside it, and horror and panic seized the world when the crystal was broken and the black spot liberated.

The Shuttered Room

By E. F. Benson

A ghastly horror hovered over this seemingly cheerful house—a tale of clairvoyance by a well-known British writer of weird stories.

Skull-Face

By Robert E. Howard

This swift-moving serial rises to a crashing climax in the powerful and thrilling chapters that bring the story to a conclusion in next month's issue.

These are some of the super-excellent stories that will appear in the December issue of WEIRD TALES

December Issue on Sale November 1

The GRAY KILLER

"The figure came close to my bed, and by a supreme miracle of will I opened my mouth."

Narrative and Diary of Marion Wheaton, Patient in R——— Hospital from November 15 to November 28, 1928.

SUCH terrible things are happening here that I feel the need to set them down, as I dare not speak to anyone of my thoughts and of my fears. I will go back and begin at the beginning, a few nights ago. Later, if there is more to be written—God grant there may not be!—I will continue this narrative as a diary.

It began three nights ago—and this is the twenty-sixth of November. The red light in the corridor outside my door burned like an eye lit with an ugly menace. In the dead of night bells sounded intermittently—the shrill ringing of the

by Everil Worrell

telephone, or the rasping buzzer that could mean so many things. Cold, and the need to borrow strength to spread a blanket within fingertip reach. Night loneliness and night terrors; fear of the known and of the unknown; fear of a stabbing agony called life and of a veiled release called death. Terror of pain. And in the shut-in private rooms and in the bare, orderly wards, that hydra-headed horror of a hospital—pain itself.

I, too, was in pain. A rusty nail had gone through the thin sole of my slipper and torn a gash in my foot which nearly ended in blood poisoning. And on the night of November twenty-third I lay tossing in my hot bed, feeling the burning lances of flame shoot upward from the horribly swollen foot.

Lying so, I had the horrors, rather. I was not out of the woods, not by a long shot. My foot might mend rapidly, or it might yet take a sudden turn for the worse, in which case I should leave this narrow room only for a narrower one. The woman across the hall, who had had her fourth operation for cancer, would be leaving so, perhaps, and would, I believed, be glad to go. Her broken moans had seemed to tell me that. And there was a man down the corridor who groaned. . . .

Well, I wished it were over and I were well, and safely out of the place. And in the meantime the bedcovers were too heavy and were burning me up, adding needlessly to my tortures.

I rang my bell, and listened to its dull, rasping sound in the distance. In some hospitals only a light flashed on a signal board and over your door —better arrangement, I'd say.

I waited for Miss Larcom or Miss Wurt. Miss Larcom would seem glad to see me—she would make me feel better and think of little extra things to do for me. Miss Wurt would snap at me, cross at having had to put down her novel. And she would do as little as she could, and very likely drag the covers roughly over that fiendish foot of mine. But if Miss Wurt were on the floor tonight, I should likely have to ring again.

I waited. It didn't do to ring again too soon. Then Miss Wurt would be certain to let those covers saw across my foot—or was that one of those sick, invalid fancies of which one hears? Still, all nurses aren't alike, and they aren't all angels.

I waited, and heard an unfamiliar footstep, that seemed to slide a little —not to shuffle but to slide, as a serpent would slide on hard ground or on a hard floor. Why did a coldness strike me then, that made me draw closer the covers that had irked me? And why did a sudden vivid conscious love of life and of the earth on which my days were spent sweep over me? I was afraid of the *emptiness* outside this world I knew; a realization of the vacant chasm of space swept my soul. Was it death I feared in that moment, or had I an instinctive prescience of strange Things—real, but unknown?

Sick terrors of a hospital night! I fixed my gaze unwaveringly on the doorway. Mustn't let Miss Wurt catch me looking or acting goofy. It would be fun for her to recommend me to the psychopathic ward. (No, of course I didn't think that seriously; of course I was just being an imaginative sick person.)

At any rate, my whole attention was on the dim-lit oblong of my door. The footsteps that sounded, somehow, so unusual, paused before a figure was framed there; not, however, before one of the feet that made the sliding sound was visible. There it was, for a few moments, alone: the end of a shoe that seemed enormously long. Then the figure caught up with the foot—not Miss Wurt or Miss Larcom, but a man.

A man dressed in gray. A man whose *face* (in the half-light, at least) was gray. Whose face, whose form, whose way of walking, I—didn't like. My fingers sought the bell cord.

Before they found it, however, the room was flooded with light. That seemed reassuring, somehow, and I was ashamed of my panic—my flightiness I ought perhaps to call it.

In a hospital you get used to people going and coming, surprizing you when you're awake, surprizing you when you're asleep. Strange nurses with thermometers happen in every day; strange house doctors now and then. I didn't need his statement now to fit him in.

"I'm Dr. Zingler, the new house doctor. Haven't seen you before. I

have heard you had a hard time with your foot. I came because I heard your bell, and the nurse did not answer. Miss Wurt—I will send her, though I am afraid she moves slowly. In the meantime, if it is pain, I can help you."

In a reaction from the fantastic fear that had laid hold on me, I smiled warmly up at the strangely pallid face. Grayish skin, sunken cheeks, hollow, *hungry* eyes, and a strange, deathly immobility of feature—if an attractive personality was necessary to success the new house doctor was foredoomed to failure. Yet his professional manner was good enough, though somehow rather strange, too. Suave and smooth, but—indescribably queer.

I smiled, with an effort.

"Pain—yes, my foot hurts," I answered him, trying to make light of it. "But I rang for Miss Wurt merely to have her turn back the top coverings, to cool my foot, especially. I feel as though it were roasting over red-hot coals."

The ill-favored face looking down on me seemed to attempt a smile of sympathy.

"Miss Wurt will be able to make you more comfortable, no doubt," it promised. "But I think I can do more—I think I can insure you sleep for the remainder of the night. I'll just give you a hypodermic."

A wave of gratitude swept over me. I'd had a few brief intervals of forgetfulness when the pain was greatest, by the administration of a hypo; lately these had been discontinued. Complete oblivion for a few hours would be welcome now.

I watched Dr. Zingler as he busied himself with a small box and its contents, which he took from a pocket; did the man carry hypodermics and opiates always like this, ready for instant use? Generally the doctors rang for a nurse. . . .

THE hypodermic, held in a bony, long-fingered hand of the same unholy color as Dr. Zingler's face, moved toward me. I glanced at it, idly, baring my arm for the merciful prick. It was near my face as I looked at it. Heavens, how strange! Or was it due to fever that every little happening of this night took on a grotesque significance? Be that as it may, the appearance of the liquid in the hollow glass tube was violently repulsive to me: a viscid, slimy-looking, yellowish white, with an overtone of that same gray color that made the hand holding it look like the hand of a corpse. At the same moment an odor assailed my nostrils: a putrescent aroma of decay; the very essence of death embodied in a smell.

The needle was approaching my arm when I drew away from it—hurled myself from it, rather, forgetful of my foot, crouching in the far corner of my narrow hospital bed like a trapped animal at bay.

"No, no!" I cried, my voice rising queerly. "I won't take it, I'm not in pain, I need nothing! I'll ring, I'll scream! I'll arouse the whole floor!"

The gray doctor—so I thought of him and shall always think of him—withdrew his hand, an expression of extreme contempt stamping his immobile features.

"Of course, if you prefer to bear your pain!" he shrugged. "Though it hardly needed such vehemence. There's a ward for patients like you where the walls are thicker. As to arousing *this* floor, I think you've succeeded in your humane endeavor. Listen!"

I listened. God forgive me, I had succeeded. The woman with the cancer was moaning pitiably—but for the opiates given her so heavily she would doubtless be shrieking. Down the hall the man with the grievous hurt was groaning, delirious too:

"Mary, you've come at last! Oh, no, nurse, it's only you! She died in the accident—I remember," he

wailed. And then, again: "Oh, Mary, at last!"

Also the little boy who had had a tonsillectomy done yesterday was screaming down the hall, hoarse, half-intelligible words.

I buried my head beneath the covers in an agony of shame as I heard the sliding step of the doctor withdrawing. Through my door it passed and across the hall, and I heard the familiar hinge of the cancer patient's door creak. Well, perhaps he could quiet her, the new doctor. What had been the matter with me, anyway? Had I been mad?

Another footstep approached my door, a well-known footstep. Miss Wurt's healthy, round, red face appeared like an unamiable harvest moon. She fixed my covers, not so roughly as I had feared, and stood ready to depart. "That all?" she suggested hopefully.

"Almost," I said, detaining her with an urgent gesture. "But tell me—is Dr. Zingler often on the floor at night? He's—a queer-looking man, is he not?"

The red of Miss Wurt's face deepened to a mild purple. Some attraction between her and the new doctor, on her side at least, that was certain. Then my remark had been undiplomatic.

It had.

"I've never heard any of the patients comment on Dr. Zingler's personal appearance," she said in icy reproof.

I was glad to drop the subject. Next morning, however, I had a real surprize.

Miss Edgeworth, my day nurse, was a friendly girl, who had fallen into a habit of gossiping with me about the people and happenings around the hospital. After the night I hailed her coming with relief. I'd even dare tell her if I chose, I thought, that the new house doctor gave me the horrors.

"Have you seen Dr. Zingler?" I began tentatively as she wet my wash cloth, preparatory to washing my face.

"Dr. Zingler?" she answered with a quick look of pleasure and what appeared to be a blush. "He's the kind that makes the grind go easier. Handsome, too, isn't he? Or have you seen him?"

"Yes——" I hesitated. "I've seen him."

I said no more. Surely he must hypnotize the nurses. That gray pallor, those mask-like features—handsome! I turned my face to the wall and lay brooding. My foot was better today. I had leisure to wonder if I need feel graver concern for my mind. Last night was a nightmare, and the new "handsome" doctor a hideous ghoul! No, no—what was I thinking? Things that weren't possible! Had I fallen victim to an obsession, a hallucination?

THE greater part of the morning I brooded. And then I heard something that made me forget myself.

The house doctor whom I was accustomed to see on his daily rounds, Dr. Rountree, called a little after 3. Like Nurse Edgeworth, he occasionally stayed for a short chat. Today, however, I knew at once that he had something important on his mind—something, perhaps, which he hesitated to speak of.

"Have you heard the news about that cancer patient you've been grieving so over?" he began.

"The cancer case!"

I think there was horror in my voice. In my mind was a picture of a gray figure stalking, *sliding* in at the door behind which those hopeless moans were uttered. I think I was prepared for something gruesome, something incredibly awful, certainly not for Dr. Rountree's next words.

"It's something like a miracle, it seems," he said. "You know, we don't talk about these things, but this

case was really hopeless. There couldn't have been another operation; and the thing still was gnawing at her vitals. Well! It was a case for increasing opiates until the end, with the opiates losing their power to alleviate. You've heard her moaning in spite of them. But today! Have you heard her? Listen!"

I listened. No, it was true, I had not heard her. The man down the corridor still groaned. The little boy who had lost his tonsils did not cry so much. The cancer patient had been silent all the morning, as she was now.

Again I felt a recurrence of my first horror.

"Not—dead!" The word one hates even to think in a hospital.

But Dr. Rountree shook his head and made a quick gesture with his hand that he used in moments of great enthusiasm.

"Oh, no, no!" he said quickly. "So much better that we've discontinued all opiates. Fully conscious and out of pain. A miracle, positively. She had an opiate last night, she says, though it isn't down on her chart. She was semi-conscious and didn't know who gave it to her, but she had that one—and hasn't needed one since. And she's stronger, too; the mere cessation of pain, I suppose, has given her the will to live. If it goes on this way her wound will heal and she'll go out in two weeks time, a well woman. I've never heard of such a thing!"

"Dr. Zingler went into her room. He had wanted to give me an opiate and must have given her hers," I said. "He's—rather hard to look at, isn't he?"

Dr. Rountree's face showed puzzlement.

"Didn't know Zingler was on last night, but he'd leave the opiates to the nurses, I should think," he said shortly. "He'll have the patients expecting the doctors to wash their faces for them next. As to looks, you're the first girl I've heard express a contrary opinion. Most of the nurses seem to think he's an Atlantic City beauty."

I tried during the rest of the long day to be glad of my neighbor's good fortune. I could not. I could only think with a kind of shrinking dread of the "handsome" Dr. Zingler slipping in at her door in the dead of night.

Of course it was only coincidence that the gray doctor had administered the woman's last opiate, and that the next day she had been so miraculously better. Only coincidence. Nevertheless, I inconsistently told myself that I would rather die than be miraculously cured by Dr. Zingler.

LIGHT came.

Again the red light in the darkened hall loomed sinister, ominous, and the shadows it gave were macabre. My foot was better tonight—still a tortured thing of fire and anguish, yet definitely better. If I had rung for a sedative which I had had upon request several times, I might have slept. But I didn't want to sleep, though I knew that sleep was necessary to my recovery. I had a horror of sleeping and waking to see a long, narrow foot pressing the threshold of my door—to see a gray figure creeping in at that door.

I would have given worlds to be able to lock my door on the inside. Since that was impossible I had it left open as usual, and kept my eye on the dull red oblong of light.

Hour after hour. The man down the hall was groaning, now—groaning in delirium, raving of the accident that brought him here. Not an auto smash, but a derailed train. I'd read of it. Only a few passengers hurt, but this man's wife, Mary, had been killed. He was crying her name out loud again, calling to her.

His groans—they hurt. Hospital nights! Awfulness of pain. Oh, why didn't someone hear and go to him?

Miss Wurt on duty again, of course, and reading in whatever quiet corner she spent her nights. If she heard the groans, she didn't care. Oh, *why didn't someone go?*

And then I knew someone was going. For I heard footsteps, and they were the slow, sliding steps of Dr. Zingler. A door opened and shut. After a little, the groaning was cut off suddenly, as though a sound-proof wall had intervened.

Then I lay listening, till, after a long time, those sliding footsteps crept into the corridor. No sound, now, from the man who had groaned, as they retreated—going in the opposite direction from my door, thank God!

And still not another sound from the man who had groaned. The sufferer might have had his throat cut.

Next morning, however:

"You'd never imagine the things that are going on in this hospital!" Miss Edgeworth cried as she brought my morning thermometer. "Too bad *you* haven't come in for a miracle. You're mending, but slowly. Not like the case across the hall, I mean, or the railroad accident."

"The man from the railroad wreck—oh, what became of him?" My voice was sharp with anxiety, and Miss Edgeworth showed surprize and a little disapproval.

"You're guessing wrong, when you ask what's 'become of' him in *that* tone!" she said. "What's 'become of' him is that an almost hopeless spine condition is miraculously improved. He is out of pain. He can move his legs under the covers and we thought they'd always be like fallen logs. That's what's 'become of' him!"

I turned my face to the wall, because I couldn't smile, couldn't show the decent human emotion of pleasure at another's merciful reprieve. Why couldn't I? Because my mind could image just one thing: the sound of those horrible, sliding footsteps last night, the picture I had visualized then of a lanky form and a gray death's-head creeping in at the delirious man's door—creeping out, leaving silence behind him.

What kind of opiate did the new doctor dispense, that not only alleviated pain, but cured everything from cancer to an injured back? Well, of course there was no connection; if there were, I should be honoring the gray doctor as a worker of miracles. But I didn't. I felt a greater horror of him than ever—and that horror extended itself now to the two who had so strangely recovered after his midnight visits.

Not for all the gold in the mint would I have entered the room of the cancer patient, or the room of the man who had been in the railroad wreck.

THE next two nights I slept heavily. My foot was improving more rapidly, and I was worn out with pain and with night vigils. True, I closed my eyes with a sense of surrounding peril of some queer, undreamable kind, but I closed them nevertheless, and opened them only as the winter dawn crept in at my windows. And on the second morning I think I must have given Miss Edgeworth a real shock.

She had merely mentioned the little boy who had had his tonsils out.

"Rodney Penning—the little tonsillectomy case——" she began.

I caught her arm in a grip that must have hurt.

"Has *he* had a sudden strange improvement?" I asked in a tone that rang unpleasantly in my own ears.

Miss Edgeworth drew her arm away from me and passed the fingers of her other hand speculatively over her sleeve.

"I think you've bruised me, Miss Wheaton," she said reprovingly; "I must speak to the head nurse about a sedative for you. I don't know why you should be so dreadfully nervous,

now your foot's doing so well. As for little Rodney Penning—I don't understand your question. Of course he's improved. Many children leave the hospital on the day of a tonsillectomy. Little Rodney is going home tomorrow."

I CAN hardly write of the horror of that tomorrow. I can hear yet the screams of little Rodney's mother—when little Rodney went home.

The little lad had cried pitifully after the operation on his throat. That wound had been agony for a child to bear. But the making of it was merciful: *that* cutting had been done under anesthesia. There was no anesthetic when the little boy's newly healed throat was neatly cut from the outside, so that his head was nearly severed from the trunk, and a great pool of blood had washed with red, as though a careless painter had smeared his paints, the skylight over the operating-room. The skylight? Yes, that was where the body was found, a shapeless black blob against the wan-starred sky of early dawn.

But the worst thing of all I have not yet written down. The worst thing of all was also the thing in which lay the greatest mystery.

Surely little Rodney Penning had been done to death by a mad fiend, for his body was transfixed with a needle-shaped bar of iron, bearing on the pointed end a barb suggestive of the barb of a fish-hook. And to the blunter end of the bar appended a fine but strong steel cord. It was as if some maniac obsessed with the harmless sport of fishing had played at using human bait. Only, if so, scarce half a mile from the hospital pounded the surf of the Atlantic. So why did he choose the hospital roof to carry out his grim travesty?

Writing this has turned me quite sick. If it had not been for this horror, I would soon be able to leave the hospital—and to tell the truth, I have conceived a horror of the whole place. The condition of my foot now permits me to get around on crutches. But they say, and my doctor says, that I am too nearly in a state of nervous collapse to permit of my discharge. And besides, an eruption has appeared on my body which has resulted from my near approach to blood poisoning, and which they say requires observation. I am on a special diet, and everyone is particularly thoughtful and considerate — even Miss Wurt. But I do not see how I can get better with this horror clutching at my heart.

They didn't mean to tell me, of course. But I had heard the screams of little Rodney's mother, and wormed the truth out of black Hannah, who brings the patients' trays. I was hysterical then, and from something the house doctor who is my friend, Dr. Rountree, said to me, I must have said some terrible things about Dr. Zingler. Dr. Rountree's eyes are dark and very deep, and can be very kindly and pitiful, and I know that he meant me to take what he said very seriously.

"Don't speak of your feeling about Dr. Zingler, Miss Wheaton, to *anyone*. Much better yet, never speak of Dr. Zingler at all."

I wish I had friends in this city. I wish I could be moved at once to another hospital. I don't seem quite able to arrange such a thing from inside. I spoke of it to my doctor, who is a great specialist, and so of course very impersonal. His eyes narrowed as he answered me, and I knew that he was studying me—regarding me as a case, and not as a human being.

"I can't order all my patients out of the hospital because of the most awful occurrence that has given you the horrors, Miss Wheaton, for I don't attribute it to any negligence on the part of the hospital officials. None of the other patients know of this thing. You gossip too much, ask too many questions for your own good, inquire

too much into the goings on around the hospital. Then I must add to that an unfortunate tendency on your part to take personal dislikes, and most unreasonable ones. Not, for instance, that it injures Dr. Zingler to have you conceive an abhorrence for him—not, even, that it discredits him that you should accuse him in a hysterical fit and utterly without reason, of being the fiend killer. No, it only does *you harm.*"

The lecture went on. I turned my face to the wall. When the head nurse came in, a person who seems to have considerable authority, I said meekly that I would like to be moved to another hospital. She said only:

"There, there! Dr. Smythe-Burns wants you to stay here. We'll have you feeling more like yourself before long. And Dr. Smythe-Burns orders your nightly sedative continued. We'll have no more midnight blues."

Tuesday, November 26.

FOR all that, I had a nightmare last night.

I dreamed, most realistically, that I lay in the half stupor which bridges, under a heavy sedative, the awful chasm between "Visitors out" and the dawn light. And as I lay so, a figure came creeping in at my door—creeping on long, strangely sliding feet, and carrying in a gray, bony hand a hypodermic. The figure came close to my bed, and by a supreme miracle of will I opened my mouth and gasped my lungs full of air for a scream that would have roused the floor, if not the whole hospital—while my heavy hand moved spasmodically to grasp the bell-cord. For a while my eyes locked with the deep-set eyes in the gray face bent above me. Those eyes into which I looked were cold as the eyes of a serpent—utterly inhuman, I thought.

After awhile the eyes changed in expression. The lean, gray figure shrugged its shoulders and drew away. Then—thank God!—it left me. But I had a sort of knowledge that it meant to wait until a time when I would fail to wake.

I sounded out Miss Edgeworth about the strength of the sedative I am getting. She says it is enough to hold me, most likely, in a deep sleep all night. If I dared tell her about *last* night—but somehow I don't, after Dr. Dr. Rountree's warning. I asked my doctor, when he came, to reduce the strength of the sedative, saying I did not like to sleep so heavily it would take a great deal to waken me. He shook his head, and said I'd get over my nervous fancies, and assured me that all entrances and exits and fire escapes are being patrolled. I doubt that. It costs money to set a patrol, and I don't think it's done in a place where a single crime has occurred. In cases of *repeated* horrors——

I mustn't let myself think of the things that may be *going to* happen. But—I doubt, anyway, if any ordinary patrol could catch the gray doctor.

Wednesday, November 27.

I MADE a last attempt today, and failed.

I don't know why I had hesitated to ask Dr. Rountree's intervention. Perhaps because I like him so much. When you feel yourself sinking in a horrible morass of dread and terror, there isn't much time or energy to spare for ignoring real things. Vincent Rountree has come to be a sort of symbol to me—a symbol of all that is sound and normal, humanly healthy, pityingly tender and strong. I think he likes me too; I have been studying myself in a hand mirror at times, wondering why he should—for the dark blue of my eyes looks too sad with the dark blue circles worry has set beneath them. My hair is silky still and softly brown, but the natural curl has been all dragged out of it by fever and tossing, and although

the eruption is not on my face, my face is white and drawn-looking.

It was late this afternoon when he stopped in for the two minutes' chat I look forward to, and the sunlight slanting in at my window had already the hazy tinge of an early winter sunset.

"Could *you* do anything, Dr. Rountree—in your capacity of house doctor——" I began.

His answer put an end to my last hope.

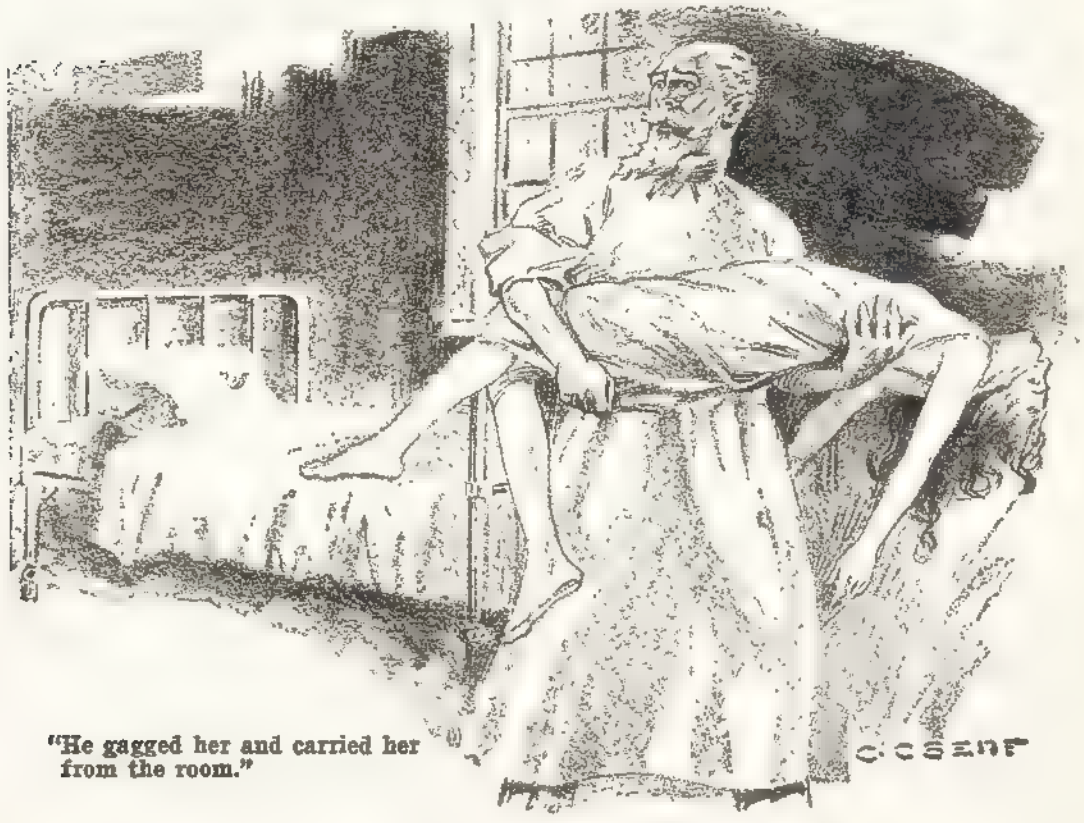
"Miss Wheaton, I've already tried. I suggested to your doctor—much more strongly than etiquette permits—well, the situation is delicate. He is afraid of offending the hospital authorities with no reason. If you discharged him and called another doctor, the situation would be much the same. I hope you'll try to take it as calmly as you can, for really all the patients in this hospital should be very safe now. It is true that special precautions are being taken, with regard to seeing visitors out, and the like."

I did not answer. The hazy yellow sunlight was fading fast—and with it my hopes. All at once a thought had definitely formed itself in my mind: that I should not leave the hospital at all—not living. I wished that I had died of blood poisoning. That is not so dreadful—not nearly so dreadful as some other things.

Vincent Rountree bridged the dark chasm of my thoughts, speaking almost shyly.

"I gained just one point—permission to take you out some evening soon in my car, in case you should consent to go. It would rest and refresh you——"

How grimly wrong he was in *that* surmise!



"He gagged her and carried her from the room."

Thursday, November 28.

ANOTHER weary night has passed and morning come—a morning of driving rain and wind that howled around the hospital's corners like a banshee. It was a fit day for a culmination of horrors—though no day could be evil enough for the gruesome discoveries this day has brought forth.

At 7 in the morning, the hour when the day nurses relieve the night shift, I heard one of the girls crying bitterly. There was a good deal of running around, then voices raised and lowered quickly.

After half an hour or so of this, there was a silence. Such a silence as I hope never again to hear. It was like the sudden stalking of death itself into the midst of a group of agitated, sentient beings.

My heart was beating heavily as I listened alone in my room. And then I heard sounds of sobbing—of more than one person sobbing.

But a little later, I beheld an agony of grief that called to mind Gethsemane.

One of the night nurses had come to the end of the corridor where my room was—to get away from the others, I suppose. She did not see that my door was open—did not even look at it. She leaned against the wall, shaking from head to foot, making no attempt to cover her face. Her arms hung down limply, as though there was no life in them. From one hand dangled her nurse's cap. Her face was so drawn and contorted with anguish that her own mother would not have known her, and her wide eyes seemed to stare as at a specter. No tears came to ease her soundless, shattering sobbing.

When I could not stand it any longer, I called to the girl, and she came as though she were walking in her sleep, and stood in my door.

"Won't you please—please tell me what has happened?" I begged.

Still in that sleep-walking manner, she answered me, her words sounding like the words of a thing that has been learned by heart:

"I am—I *was*—in charge of the night nursery—the little, new babies you know. Last night after the last feeding I fell asleep. Somehow I overslept, and so no one knew what has happened until the day shift came on."

"And—what has happened?" I prompted her in spite of myself, my tongue sticking to the roof of my mouth.

"One of the babies—the youngest little baby—a little baby two days old——"

Suddenly a realization seemed to strike the girl. I was a patient. She was a nurse. She had said too much to stop now—but she mustn't tell me anything too dreadful.

"A baby was kidnaped last night," she ended lamely.

Kidnaped! It is a terrible, dreadful thing for a little baby to be kidnaped—to disappear. But I think I know—oh, yes, *I know* what blacker horror the word covered.

I have not forgotten little Rodney Penning.

Afternoon.

ONE of the unfortunate nurse's friends came hunting for her and took her away. And all the weary, dreary day of driving rain, gloom was like an evil fog in the hospital. This time, no one can forget the tragedy for a moment. The nurses seldom talk together and if they do they seem half afraid of the sound of their own voices.

One selfish thought came to give me relief—that *now*, perhaps Dr. Smythe-Burns would sanction my removal. Perhaps—and yet, perhaps not! The web of hospital and professional etiquette is too deep for me to fathom, as it has proved too strong for me to

break. In any case, Dr. Smythe-Burns has not been in today, and I shall have to wait for his next visit. Another curious thing about hospital etiquette is that you can't telephone your doctor from the hospital. Anything he needs to know about you, someone else will tell him—perhaps. At any rate, *you* can't.

As I write, there is a congregation of doctors and nurses outside the closed door of the cancer patient across the way. A while ago I heard them gathered outside another door down the corridor. I wonder what can have happened to excite them—for I am sure they seem excited. At least the woman who had cancer has not disappeared, nor has she had a recurrence of pain. I saw her through her half-opened door this morning, eating a hearty breakfast.

Those worried faces outside her door grow graver and graver. Surely this one day can bear no heavier burden of evil than it has already disclosed.

I can't hear the voices across the hall. I am glad. I don't want to hear them. Those faces are too much to have seen, in their worry and—yes, *horror and fear again*. If any more black mishaps are to be known, I want to be spared them. I have almost reached the point where I can endure no more.

Now they are talking louder. I am afraid I shall hear—*something I don't want to hear*.

"Dr. Fritz, we didn't dare pronounce in so grave a matter until we had *your* opinion——"

"And at the same time the patient in 26—the railroad accident case——"

"Both had made miraculous recoveries—pitiful, to end in this!"

"But, the coincidence!"

"Her husband will be heart-broken. Hard to tell him—but there's no possible course but immediate isolation."

"I hardly think before tomorrow——"

"They can be sent away tomorrow. There's a small colony——"

"Could a cancer disappearing suddenly, then, take *this* form?"

"Nurse, you'd make a very imaginative research scientist. Certainly not! And in *his* case, it was merely a railroad accident."

"But for both of them to have——"

* * * * *

Before writing the word that must come next, I fainted.

I had written, not everything that I heard said, but as much as I had time for. At the end I fainted—I don't know how long I have been unconscious here alone. But now I must finish—must write that horrible word:

Leprosy!

The gray doctor. The hypodermic filled with a strange, filthy-smelling stuff—which he intended to shoot into *my* veins, too. Dr. Zingler, the gray doctor, the gray fiend! And I mustn't speak of these horrors; of the things I am thinking—not to anyone. . . .

My hand is shaking so that I can hardly write, and I am sobbing—dry, tearing sobs like those of the nurse this morning. But mine are not soundless as hers were—I must put this book away, for I am losing all control of myself — someone is coming. . . .

Chart of patient Marion Wheaton, November 28, 1929.

DELIRIOUS as result of recent catastrophes in hospital. Shows mental aberration as well, however, accusing one of the house doctors of horrible and fantastic crimes. Ordered detained for observation a short while, then, failing improvement, transfer to a psychopathic institution. The house doctor who is the subject of the patient's hallucination has been kept from her presence. Dr. Rountree is

given permission to take the patient out in his car when the weather permits.

Diary of Marion Wheaton, November 29, 10 P. M.

I AM keeping this small notebook always in the pocket of my dressing-gown now. I have a feeling that it may some day furnish important evidence—perhaps after I have been locked up in an insane asylum, or perhaps after I am dead. The latter seems to be most likely. More and more as the moments pass, I feel that my life while I stay here is hanging by a thread. Removal, even to the hospital for the insane, would be merciful; I doubt if I shall live to know that mercy.

This evening Dr. Rountree took me for the ride which was to have calmed my nerves. Thank God, he at least knows that my mind is not unhinged. He even talks to me freely of the things which are supposed to be kept from me—and that goes far to restore my mental balance and self-confidence.

"I can't understand your feeling about Zingler," he said. "I find him a likable chap. However—just try again, try still harder, not to refer to that feeling.

"And I know there's no reason for all this whispering behind your back. Today, for instance—you've heard them talking all day over some new excitement, I know. As a matter of fact, it's leaked out; everyone in the hospital has heard of it. It's this. Those two patients in 19 and 26 have developed leprosy in an unheard-of manner—as though a noxious plant were to strike root in soil where it had not been sown, and to grow to maturity in the passing of a night. An unheard-of change in human tissues!

"However, today's *new* mystery is merely this: the man in 26 has been removed to a leper colony; the woman in 19, however, has—disappeared."

I gave a sudden, startled cry.

"No—no!" he reassured me, quickly. "Not another murder tragedy—simply and really a disappearance. Her husband seems completely mystified; but somehow, someone has saved her from incarceration, I suppose. A pity too, since leprosy may now often be cured."

I leaned back in my seat. The sea wind was in my face—I felt relaxed for the first time in days. But of course—I couldn't forget the things in both our minds.

"I don't want any horrible details," I said. "But about the—the little baby who was—kidnaped—was there, that time, any clue at all?"

Vincent Rountree nodded. "One clue, pointing to the hypothesis that the maniac may be a religious fanatic," he said shortly. "On a flat part of the roof, a sort of altar——"

I wondered. Would a doctor of medicine be likely to be a religious fanatic? Could I, after all, be wrong?

I felt myself shaking, and he felt it too as his arm touched mine.

"Try to forget!" he urged. "There are, after all, other things—things of beauty. Night—stars—the sea"—his last word was shaped soundlessly rather than spoken; I thought that it was—"you!"

He parked the car near the beach. I am able to walk with a cane, now, and so I took his arm and we walked along the sand.

God! We walked along the sand!

It was I who saw first, caught against one of the dry rocks of a jetty above the level of high tide—something. Something—a hank of white fuzz in the starlight. No, not exactly fuzz. A hank, grayish white, of something like human hair.

A hank of gray-white hair, roughly or carelessly torn from a woman's head.

It was Vincent, then, who saw how the sand was tumbled and rough and uneven, in an irregular patch some six feet long and two or three feet wide. Six feet by two or three!

Both of us felt that it was necessary —a duty, at least—to make sure, to investigate—*to find out if there were anything hidden beneath that oblong of tumbled sand.*

I waited alone at a little distance with my back turned. Vincent came to me very soon. His face was livid in the starlight, and he looked ill.

"I am a doctor, and I've seen things——" he began. Then he pulled himself together. "We'll both be called as witnesses of this, but you must come away. It—was very near the surface. It—was the woman who had cancer—who had leprosy. Her disappearance was—not an escape."

Back at the hospital, I was taken directly to my room and prepared for the night, with the usual sedative—unless, perhaps, they may have strengthened it in view of the experience I have just passed through. I have written this in bed, and will slip the book into the handkerchief pocket of the crêpe de chine gown I am wearing.

The hour for "Visitors out" has passed. The hall lights are out, except the dim light from the far end of the hall and the nearer, lurid red light that I have always disliked, as though I knew somehow that *sometime* I was to see by that light a thing that would terrify me—live through, in its glare, something more dreadful than all that has come, so far, to me myself. Is tonight the night? More than ever, I am afraid. That red light! The light of morning shining through the blood-stained skylight over the operating-room on the morning when Rodney Penning lay murdered there, must have been of such a color.

I wish that I could stay awake—tonight of all nights.

I wish by some happy miracle I could know that for this one night that gray figure was outside the hospital walls. Does a house doctor always "sleep in"?

I feel that tonight I *must* keep awake. But can I?

I can not. I—am going . . . .

Last entry in Marion Wheaton's hospital diary. Written between midnight and 2 a. m., November 28.

IN THE little time *he* has been gone, I have been praying for mercy. I can not feel that my prayers will be answered. Was there mercy for little Rodney Penning? For the new-born baby taken from the nursery? Was there mercy for the woman who had cancer?

There is a chance that he may overlook the small diary notebook and pencil tucked in the pocket of my nightgown with my handkerchief. In that unlikely event, this will serve as evidence.

I must hurry. At any moment he will return. He is on the roof by the skylight, and I can hear him mumbling—a sort of chant. He *has*, then, a religious mania. But the fiend is—Dr. Zingler.

I waked to find him bending over me, and I waked too late. He crammed a large handkerchief into my mouth before terror had struggled through my stupor. But tonight, he had no hypodermic.

"A large bait—*It* must want a larger sacrifice," he was saying. And his eyes—I swear they were not human, somehow. They were as ruthlessly cruel as the eyes of a serpent.

Pressing the handkerchief down my throat so that I was half strangled, he dragged me from my bed and carried me down the hall. And Miss Wurt saw us—she passed by the stairs just as he started to mount them, and she

saw us, and started back in horror. But she made no move to help me, only shrank away. Nor has she given any alarm, for — God pity me! — I have been strapped to the operating-table by ankles and body for fully half an hour, waiting for his return with that sharp knife he chose before he went out and somehow reached the roof and began puttering about up there—and chanting.

By turns he called me a "bait" and a "sacrifice." Yes, the gray doctor is a fiend—a mad fiend! He will butcher me here, and I shall die trying to scream, with this gag in my mouth; I shall die in agony and terror unspeakable—and he will merely be locked up somewhere afterward.

His voice is rising as he chants. Soon, now——

* * * * *

He is worse than a fiend and a maniac. He is in league with supernal powers of evil.

As he chanted, I saw for a little while, through the skylight—a *Thing*. I can think of no word for it. It seemed to swoop down suddenly, as from a great distance—as though a monster had emerged from the cold abyss between the stars. And it was monster-size, so that I saw only a little part of it — and that was a sort of huge, pulsing projection which seemed to press against the skylight—and in which there was something that might have been either eye or mouth —I believe it to be both. A mouth that sees; an eye that may devour.

The gray doctor must not have expected his celestial visitant quite so soon; for I heard running feet on the roof—and now I hear him outside the door of the operating-room, fumbling with the lock. He had locked it after him. It will take but an instant——

May God—Who surely reigns supreme somewhere beyond such foul blasphemies as haunt space—have mercy on my soul!

And if this testimony is accepted, do not treat Dr. Zingler as an ordinary maniac. He is——

Excerpt from the testimony of Nurse Wurt, following her confession.

OF COURSE I knew that "the gray doctor" was not Dr. Zingler, though I was on night duty and Dr. Zingler was seldom on the floor at night.

This stranger appeared—I didn't know how. He made love to me. I had never been noticed in that way before. Some women never are. The other nurses had affairs—I never.

I let him frequent my floor against the regulations. When the first crime occurred—I did not believe it was he. A little later, I would not believe it. Still later, I was afraid—afraid of him, and afraid to confess that at such a time I had been allowing the presence on my floor at night of a man utterly unknown to me—to anyone.

When he carried Miss Wheaton up the stairs, I knew—I feared—but I was afraid *then* to cry out.

Statement of Dr. Rountree made before the Hospital Committee of Investigation.

I AM laying before the committee the confession of the Gray Killer, as he has come to be called—or "The Gray Doctor", as Miss Wheaton called him —poor girl, when to peril of her life the hospital authorities saw fit to add the peril of being judged insane. It will be remembered that no confession could be forced from the Killer by the police; that I alone was able to obtain his remarkable statement, spurred by my anxiety to substantiate the statements made in those lines written in Miss Wheaton's diary on the operating-table. Those lines have been called "ravings". And out of the regard I had come to have for Miss Wheaton while she was a patient here

and out of the deep confidence I felt in her judgment, I determined to seek corroboration for those very statements which must naturally appear the most insupportable.

Her confusion of the Killer, whose confession is appended below, with Dr. Zingler, is most natural. She had never seen Dr. Zingler, and after she had encountered and conceived a horror of the Killer, Dr. Zingler was kept from her room. She naturally felt assured that Miss Wurt would have known of the habitual presence of any stranger, and so accepted the Killer's statement as to his identity.

Out of the depths of my anxiety to substantiate Miss Wheaton's story, I have done a difficult thing—approached the Killer in the guise of a friend. I obtained—a confession. And before this confession is judged to be utterly beyond the bounds of possibility, I will ask urgently that two things be explained away—*the feet of the Killer—and his manner of cheating the law.*

The Confession

NEVER again shall I return home, and it is all in vain. Nevertheless, easily can I escape the pit into which I have dug my way. There is always the ultimate way out.

Even to me, who can regard all of the race of Earth as so many stupid cattle, the enmity that surrounds me now grows heavy to bear. Also, why should one suffer punishment and death at the hands of inferiors? But before I enter the great oblivion I will give my story to Dr. Rountree, who alone has dealt with me as with a man of knowledge, and not a crazy man whose wits have gone astray.

Know, then, that my home is not upon Earth, but rather on Horil, satellite which circles a sun that burns beyond the narrow limits of this galaxy. Is the planet Earth then unknown to the dwellers of Horil? No, for the astronomers of Horil compare with those of Earth as Earth's greatest astronomer might compare with a child with an opera glass.

On Horil, I was for eleven centuries high priest to the Devil-God of Space. (I approximate terms familiar to men of Earth.) We of Horil believe that a great Power of Good has created all things, and that He is opposed by a lesser Power of Evil. But we worship at no shrine to an Unknown God on Horil—and the Devil-God of Space is very real, and one of the most dreaded of those strange beings that infest the trackless ether.

Its characteristics? As to form of worship, a love of human sacrifice. To many an altar on Horil It has descended, to snatch thence living food.

Its form and nature?

The biologists of Horil are far in advance of those of Earth, as you shall see. Yet even they do not understand the nature of the great denizens of Space. They may breathe ether —they may be forms of vibral energy, and know no need to breathe, being electro-chemical in their nature. But —whether or not the Devil-God breathes—It *eats.*

As to form—here is a coincidence for the philosophers of Earth to ponder, parallel to that phenomenon by which unrelated races of the Earth find for the same things names built on similar phonetic principles. The form of the Devil-God of Horil and of Space resembles that of the monster of the deep which men on Earth have named the devil-fish. Miss Wheaton described truly the appearance of one of its monster tentacles, and she was right in her surmise that the orifice on the end serves both as mouth and eye.

So. My deity was a being of definite power and substance, of knowledge of the far corners of the universe, and of great evil. To Horil It may have been drawn by the psychic

(Continued on page 717)

The ROC

by GEORGE B. TUTTLE

IT SEEMS strange, now, that the first newspaper report of the stupendous menace received so little space, and was so frivolously treated:

Pierre, S. D., Oct. 29, 1929. (Special.) An enormous bird swooped from the sky to the farm of James French, in Clinton Township, twenty miles from here, yesterday. He picked up an ox in his talons, and flew away with it.

Local scientists think that it was a plesiosaurus (sic) that has somehow survived from prehistoric times.

[Editorial note. The "local scientists" have probably confused "plesiosaurus" with "pterodactyl." The former was a large water reptile with a long neck. The latter was the ancestor of birds and the first vertebrate to fly. Of course it was really a large eagle, which flew away with a lamb.]

The great Chicago paper that printed the item above was somewhat sarcastic about the flying monster, but was very careful, just the same, to put the story on the front page. Its news judgment was vindicated, and its scientific comments riddled when similar stories appeared in the evening papers.

Various points in the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois reported

RAID

"The slaughter was fearful, and not only among the rocs."

visitations of the same kind. Near Davenport, Iowa, a man was snatched up in the fields; another in Rochester, Minnesota. Two stories of cattle being carried away came from other correspondents. The star happening, however, was at Cairo, Illinois, where old John, the famous Ringling circus elephant, was taken while the parade was forming.

This attack was in the presence of thousands, who were able to give a fairly coherent description of the event. A bird, much like an eagle, but of a wing-spread variously described as from two hundred to five hundred feet, swooped from the air, "just like any hawk," fastened his claws into old John, and flew away

with him without an effort. A faint trumpet was the last heard of the elephant.

The press agent of the show knew his *Arabian Nights*, and furnished a possible clue. "Of course I don't know where it came from, nor the genus and species, but in Lane's *Arabian Nights* there is an old line drawing of a roc carrying off an elephant. When this bird came down, and took off old John, it was like a reproduction of this picture."

It was very plain that the rocs, as the public at once named the flying raiders, were to be a problem to the West, and possibly to the whole country. They were ferocious and too powerful to resist except by heavy firearms. A bird that could pick up the largest land animal in its claws and fly away with him could only be dealt with by military methods.

And no ordinary methods, either. Anti-aircraft guns? Millions would be needed to protect the menaced territory. Their doubtful success in the war did not inspire much confidence.

Fire to fight fire; planes were what were needed: many to be ready on the ground to go in chase at the first word of the rocs' appearance; others to make a systematic search for their resting-place. They obviously could not stay on the wing all the time. Somewhere there must be an eyrie—a giants' eyrie.

Naturally the discussion of their whereabouts raised the question: "Where did they come from before they started raiding?" There were the many wild theories usual in a mystery. The Sahara Desert, Mongolia, Papua, the North Pole were suggested. One enterprising newspaper editor had the idea that they might have come out of "Symmes' Hole," told of by an American many years ago as an opening at the North Pole to the hollow interior of the earth, and said to be a pleasant place of habitation. He asked Dr. Cook in his prison cell at Leavenworth if he had seen "Symmes' Hole" when he was north. That worthy, however, was through. His answer was that he wanted to see nothing but the outer air, and had nothing to say about the Pole.

"A dark planet near the Perseus meteors," was the suggestion of an amateur astronomer. "In August we passed through that cloud of meteors. They are thought to be part of a broken-up comet and appear annually. It is very possible that there is a larger mass, forming a small planet, near or among them. On this planet dwell these, let us call them, rocs. This year it may have come so near the earth as to mingle the two atmospheres. A number of the rocs, inhabitants of the planet, accidentally stayed with us. We know that other worlds contain stones and gases similar to those comprising our earth. The spectrum teaches us that. And the meteors that fall are from outside our sphere, but are of familiar minerals. What more possible than that the atmosphere of this dark planet is similar to that of our own, and that these birds, much like some here, but larger, have developed? If the air is similar, they could live here."

This explanation was generally accepted.

I, Henry Latham, began to figure in the conflict from the very beginning. I was a reserve officer in the United States army. During service in France I had flown an observation plane. My work had been very successful because of an inborn taste for angles and geometrical planes, which I had developed by much study. Neither promotion nor fame had come to me. Making photographs of enemy areas is a useful part of war, but does not bring one to the knowledge of one's superiors. I was no ace, in fact never brought down an enemy plane. A couple that interfered with my work did, it is true, come down of themselves, but no one paid any attention to that.

I was in the air service of the reserves and at once began to make myself useful in what was recognized as an emergency.

For the roc̆s were busy. They raided everywhere, taking cattle, men, horses. No one could discover where they came from or whither they went.

EFFORTS were soon begun to combat the invaders, but with little success. Every available army, navy and mail plane was mobilized, armed with machine-guns and bombs, and sent to the Middle West. I assisted in mapping out their disposition, and my work attracted favorable attention from the war department. I was promoted to major, and put in charge of seeing that the machines were regularly and evenly distributed.

"Put them so that they will be at exact distances apart," I was told. This did not seem to me to be the proper disposition for what was really a military problem. An army is not distributed in that way, but is massed. It was not the time to criticize, however, but to obey orders.

Results were quick. Smithtown, Michigan, was the scene of the first clash between a most highly developed instrument and a living creature far surpassing any of the so-called "brutes" with which we are familiar. For it was apparent in a flash that we were dealing not only with size and strength, but brains. Alfred S. Fowler, a competent, trained aeronaut, as it happened, a soldier in full air training, took off against a roc that he saw hovering. Confident in his machine-gun, he went right after him. In doing so, he showed that man has not quite mastered the technique of the air. No bird would have risen right under another one that might attack him. He would have known that his enemy would swoop.

The roc did swoop, and Fowler never had a chance. The manner of the dip showed the intelligence of the invader. He did not grasp the machine in his claws, as a clumsy eagle greatly enlarged, but with an eagle's feeble brain, would have done. That, he seemed to know, would tangle him in a mass of wires and metal. Instead, he hit the side of the machine a tremendous blow with his talons. An airplane's equilibrium is not very great, and it went spinning in the air, over and over, until it crashed, with the aviator inside.

Then a curious thing happened. The bird hovered over the wreck, looking it over very critically, and finally alighted and gave it a thorough inspection. It smelt it, eyed it carefully, and made gingerly little pulls at it with beak and claws, as a cat does at something of which it is not sure.

Fowler, quick-brained, tried to outguess the bird by keeping still. It was to no avail. A great claw fished into the fuselage after him, caught him, luckily, by the strap of his parachute, and fished him out.

Let him tell his own story, as related after his rescue:

"I naturally expected death, but the roc evidently had another aim than breakfast. He eased me out as carefully as a friend would have done. It is a twisting job to get out of a plane by yourself, but he dropped and turned me at just the right times. I did not hit a wire with my body, and was just easily scraped against the side of the fuselage. Not hurt a bit. Then he picked up the plane in his beak, and flew off. It was wonderful to see the extreme care with which he maneuvered to get himself in flight without hurting me. His claw was so large that the parachute strap was caught only by the very end. (They were afterward found to be eighteen inches through at the thickest point.) He lifted the foot that held me, and hopped along on the other one to get in the air. The whirring wings beat the air like a cyclone, and the wind from them felt like one. After a

little time he got up, and then flew easily. He was so big that the plane in his beak did not hamper him at all. As for me, well, my weight was nothing, to him.

"Caught as I was only by the parachute strap, as soon as I was in the air I began to have great hopes of escape. It was getting dark, and if I could drop, the roc would lose sight of me. By the developments of modern science, it queerly happened that the height at which I was flying in the air, which would formerly have made my sole temporary salvation the attachment to my captor, would give me an opportunity for an easy escape. I had a good parachute on my back, and had dropped in one at least a hundred times. The risk was slight.

"I began to think of my report to my officers. 'Think!' That was it! As soon as I began to make my plan, the bird seemed to know something was going on in my mind. My plan, of course, was to cut the strap that held the parachute to the claw. Parachute and I would drop, and I would make my landing.

"Just as I reached up with my knife to cut the strap there was an uneasy quiver in the great claw that held me. It reached up, the other claw curled, and I was snugly deposited, parachute and all, in the clutch of that other talon. This time the bird had divined that the strap of the parachute was not a part of my body, and was taking no chances. I was firmly held, but not hurt.

"'These birds are mind-readers,' I said to myself, and it was not slang, either. In sober earnest I conceived the idea that their brains worked in tune with the thoughts of each other, and, more imperfectly, with those of other beings in their neighborhood, in whose affairs they were interested. Their unity of action showed that they have plans for carrying out what they start, and their adaption to unforseen events makes it clear that they can simultaneously change those plans to meet new circumstances. Communication by cries would be too crude for their wonderful maneuvers, and besides, the cries have not been heard.

"The delicate, ethereal force that we call mind, which we suppose, but are not sure, is worked by the brain, must be, for them, in tune with other minds; not blunderingly, unconsciously, after the manner of the mind-reading of human beings, but in a conscious, highly developed manner, as an effort of the will. These birds are beings, dependent on themselves. They have no weapons, except the terrible ones of nature. They carry no wireless apparatus of any kind. The human race is in for it. It is mind against matter. They have the minds, we the matter, by our technical skill, developed in the last century and a half.

"We were flying along at great speed. I am a skilled aeronaut, used to estimating distances up to two hundred miles an hour. The rate was higher than that (afterward calculated at about four hundred miles). Luckily I had on my flying-suit, and the roc, being of the order of eagles, pulled his comparatively short legs close up to his body, instead of dropping them like a wader.

"I was thus protected from the cold breeze that blew direct from the Arctic. 'Shall we be in the Arctic soon?' I began to think. 'Or at the Pole?' I have read of Symmes' Hole, supposed by an American writer of that name to be located there, where latitude ends. He fancied it as a depression reaching down to the center of the earth, large enough for a continent, and with a warm climate. Since his time Peary and the Nobile and Wilkins expeditions have gone over the Pole and reported it not different from other Arctic regions. So I dismissed the Pole from my calculations. I was soon to find that Symmes had a glimmering of the

truth. Locality and surface were different, but the open interior existed.

"THERE is a 'blind spot' between Point Barrow and Spitzbergen. It had never been explored before the roc raid. That, I guessed as we neared the ground, and confirmed afterward, was our destination. It had very evidently been the theater of cataclysmic earth changes within a short time. The world's seismographs had been recording great earthquakes 'somewhere,' but cables and mails had not shown where. This 'blind spot' was the place. It had been a region of geysers, hot springs and volcanoes, like the Canadian Rockies, but on a great scale. The earthquakes had made the whole area the world's greatest 'fault.' For many miles the surface had fallen in and disclosed the world beneath. This was where the rocs had lived, bred and developed for countless ages.

"We flew into the great depression, with raw earth showing at the sides, where the cave-in occurred, and were in the bird's own world. We swung in under the opening and had a new sky above us. Hardly a sky, as it was only the rock roof of this inner world. In places the depths were unfathomable to the eye. I realized that to birds with wings such an uneven floor was a matter of small importance. Man progresses easily only on a fairly level surface. Levels mean little to a bird. He hardly notices them, surmounting them by the gift of wings.

"There was plenty of light through the holes in the roof, or sky. They were of all sizes, from three feet to fifty across, and were the vent-holes of drained geysers and extinct volcanoes. The surface was only a few miles thick, I thought. At intervals solid masses of rock rose from the floor to the sky and were, I thought, vent-holes for living volcanoes and geysers. They probably furnished warmth. At any rate the air, although we were far north, was pleasant.

"As we flew along we were joined by flocks of rocs of many sizes. Some of them had evidently just learned to fly. I had that uncomfortable feeling of examination of my thoughts, not a thought transference—for I received merely a consciousness of communion—but rather an examination. They were probably puzzled, too. As the slang saying goes, 'We did not speak the same language.' That is, our ideas did not run on similar lines, and they must have had to interpret mine somewhat as one would read a cipher.

"It flashed over me that they could not give me much of a physical 'third degree.' They were too strong and I too weak. The slightest violence would kill me. Anyway, there was very little that they could learn from me. I, and my kind, worked with tools of various kinds, and we used our brains to direct and perfect our mechanical efforts. They do everything for themselves, and very little it is, with the wonderful bodies nature has given them. Their minds are superdeveloped because they have for millenniums been in this sheltered spot, with plenty of animal food available, and no forces of nature to fight, and nothing living that could cope with them.

"All around me on the ground were harmless grass and foliage eating beasts, mostly of the antediluvian type. There were mammoths, not so hairy in this pleasant climate as those dug out of the Arctic tundras, stags like the giant elk from Irish bogs, mastodons, with two pairs of tusks, one pointed up and the other down, ox-like creatures that were probably aurochs, and others whose reconstructed pictures or forms I had never seen in books or museums. 'An easy living they have,' I thought, and simultaneously was aware that they had in a general way divined what was in my mind.

"We alighted on a level spot and my captor unclutched his claw and let me roll out on the ground. I was unhurt, and being used to desperate situations in my war experience, unflustered, but realized my predicament. Not only was I doomed to death but before that I was going to undergo an inquisition of the brain. The death would be quick, and not so much to fear, but the search of mind might disclose something that would betray the human race, of which I was a member, and lead to its destruction.

"It occurred to me that the birds' minds could only read a thinking brain. Like a criminal who baffles his interrogators by not talking I was resolved not to think. Deception was impossible. They could detect it. I must keep my mind blank as I could.

"Then ensued a scene to which only the pencil of a Doré could do justice. I sat, a mite among the towering rocs, their gaze and brains concentrated on my small self. In spite of all I could do, some thoughts chased through my mind; I was unable to keep it off the general subject of the war of air and earth and gave vent to my curiosity.

"It was easy to divine how the rocs had developed as they had. Above had been the small openings in the vault of the earth's crust. They admitted light and air, but were too small for such enormous bodies to go through. The birds had never made use of tools, and so had not enlarged the holes for exit. The recent earthquake had freed them from the underground world, and curiosity led them to fly out above ground. Men, oxen, horses, and the circus elephant had been a tempting change of food to these carnivores, and they had feasted on them.

"The fight put up by men, the smallest of their victims, had alarmed their keen brains, and made them resolve to see how the machinery went. My capture and that of the plane had been the result. They were sizing us up.

"The silent inquisition continued some time, I hoped without result. Just how much they had learned from me I could not tell. My idea that they could communicate only with a working brain was only a guess, born of hope. It was very plain that their minds were much more highly developed than those of a human being, and very possibly they could explore the inmost thoughts of one so inferior in intellect.

"The seance was interrupted by several explosions. The daring Latham (he who has worked so much by formulæ would resent the epithet) had flown into the opening, seen the gathering of enemies of his race, and dropped some bombs on the throng, intent upon their examination of me. Several had been killed and injured, and there was much confusion. He guessed that I might be there, swooped over where the center of the throng had been, spied me, threw me a rope, and we were off. That is about all that I know of the rocs, and it is enough."

HERE let me, Henry Latham, take up the story again:

When I heard that Fowler had disappeared the thought at once struck me, "Has he not been captured alive? These birds are intelligent. They want one of us for critical examination just as much as we want one of them. He has been taken to wherever they live. And I think I know where that is."

Keen Canadian ex-soldiers, trained in the late war to observe and remember, had seen these birds high in air. First one man, then another. They all reported them flying north, but no one had seen them in the very far north. The inference, to my mind, was that they came from somewhere in the "blind spot." I followed there on a hunch, and saw the great new raw hole in the ground. Then I saw the inner world of our world, and the

rocs, and was sure that I had their lair. Whether it would do me any good or not I could not tell. Getting in was easy enough, but getting out would be another story. Somehow I escaped observation as I sped along, keeping as much in the shadows of the rock roof as possible. Below was a scene that was indeed of another world. The rocs were about their domestic concerns. Several were sitting on their eggs, just like hens. One rose from them in my vision, and disclosed the cream-colored globes, which seemed to be about ten feet through. Another had her brood of six chicks, and had torn some animal to pieces for their food. There were no crops, in fact no sign of manual activity, which seemed strange for such intelligent beings. I have come to the same conclusion as Fowler, that they have developed their minds instead of their ability to do things. Absence of competition has obviated the necessity of mechanical inventions. Men have always had to fight; these rocs never. But, like the most prosperous of men, when the reason for fighting came they were formidable opponents.

Soon I saw the gathering that I afterward found was giving a mind-catechism to Fowler. There was no seeing him, it may well be imagined, but my business was to find out what I could, and do all the damage possible. It was a fine chance for my bombs, and I threw them. When, as he told, I picked him up, we made up our minds that we had done a day's work, and I circled and set out for the entrance. The birds, few of whom had been killed or injured, followed in a great flock. My plane could make two hundred miles an hour, but they had the wings of us. The entrance was only a few miles away, and we made it before they caught up. The short November day was coming to an end, and in darkness we could escape them—if we could only keep away until darkness. It was now I began to realize how keen were the brains and how perfect the thought co-ordination of my opponents. Without having talked it over with Fowler I came to the same independent conclusion, that they could read each others' minds, not merely instantaneously, but by developing the thought together; and ours more slowly, but surely so far as what we were considering came within the reach of their knowledge.

When we got out in the upper world they began to use tactics. They separated into four bodies in front, diamond shape, tailing out in the rear into diamonds of the same four, but each fewer in number and closer together. It was a funnel that would close over my plane and envelop it—the air variety of the wild goose formation used by German "No Man's Land" raiders. They wanted to capture us alive, and hold us for examination, like a police magistrate.

It looked as though they would be able to do it. They knew just what was in my mind at every turn I made, and were fast closing in. Luckily, the night also closing in, I had only half of Wellington's wish at Waterloo, that night might come. There was no Blücher for me, as in the great captain's prayer that "night or Blücher would come."

They almost had me as the dusk settled, and then I played my last card. Those great minds could divine my intentions, but could not act on them unless they understood what they meant. A turn, a tailspin, a dive, were within their ken, and they followed them perfectly, but knowledge of geometrical planes, not the flying kind, but the intangible variety of two dimensions, length and breadth, was my specialty. I had worked out formulæ for shifting an airplane from one geometrical plane to another in a way that, as I have before said, had brought discomfiture on several German aeronauts that had attempted to follow my gyrations. As a flyer by the usual rules I was mediocre but

when I used my own methods, worked out in many sheets of x, y, etc., I could puzzle the best of them. A roc might learn those methods, but could not divine them. As my last hope I began my ritual, counting, and working my controls in unison. As I had guessed, it was too much even for those opponents. Swoops, dives, turns, each on a different geometrical plane, followed each other rapidly. Fowler said that his head was completely turned. Mine would have been if I had not been too busy. The roc formation was completely broken up, and I was able to dart my plane through a large opening left between several diamonds, members of which had actually collided in their confusion. My formulæ had got them off their balance. It was dark and there was no enemy in sight. We were free to fly to Winnipeg, the allied base.

On our way there, Fowler and I pooled our observations, and made deductions. Our conclusions were exactly the same, and particularly clear about the rocs' ability to read minds.

"Did you notice," I said, "how they worked together? There is perfect unity of action."

"Like pigeons," was his comment.

"Exactly. It is a development of the way pigeons fly. You have noticed how they turn, soar, dive, come together, spread out fan-shape, and huddle. In all these movements by pigeons there is no response to orders. No orders are given, you may see. If there were there would be a hesitation, a definite action, instead of the simultaneous movements that do occur. Think of a perfectly drilled body of troops on a parade ground. They are on the alert for their orders. When they receive them they carry them out exactly, but there is an interval, a perceptible one. The movement is a response. With pigeons it is not a response, but unity of purpose itself. The rocs work in this same way, but have developed it so that instead of the few simple unities of the pigeon they can do incalculable numbers of things together without formal consultation. They have been living in that inside world of theirs, and looking out of the peep-holes much as we look out at the stars, and probably with as little knowledge and as much wild speculation and especially denial as we indulge about the heavens above us. That earthquake opened up the outside world to them, and it is very much as though the heavens became suddenly accessible to us. They came out to see things."

"Yes," replied Fowler, "and they are seeing things, and learning. We too. And the animals in our part of the earth—I wonder if they will learn that their two-legged world masters are in trouble. Well, they are in the same boat with us. We eat them, but so do the rocs, and it is very little to an ox who preys on him."

My reconnoitering raid and its results caused a very uncomfortable feeling in the breasts of the human race. There was an uneasiness abroad, an idea that possibly man was threatened in what he had never even considered his citadel, but merely his dwelling, needing no protection.

In foreign countries very kind things began to be said about "our threatened American brothers" in newspapers and parliaments where comment had not always been so sympathetic. A common danger began to draw the world together. And the raids continued. Men and animals disappeared, some of them in sight, some of them without being seen to go.

The next encounter was even more discouraging. Lieutenant Camillo Perelli, second to fight and fall, had profited by the experience of Fowler. When he sighted a roc at Buffalo Lick, Minnesota, where he was stationed, he did not take off at once and under him, as his prede-

cessor had done. Waiting until the quarry had gone away some distance, he spiraled up about ten thousand feet, and then suddenly shot toward him from behind. He never could tell his own story, but observers described what happened.

"When I saw Perelli come after that bird like a streak of lightning," said old Andrew Peterson, a neighboring farmer, "I said to myself, that Eye-talian knows his business. He'll pepper him good and plenty."

He did know his business, but his tools were not good enough. He opened fire at about five hundred yards, but nothing happened. Closer and closer, and still nothing happened, except that the great roc began to soar. There were no flying feathers, no fluttering wings, no staggering fall, as had been expected.

"Is it possible that he is not hitting?" asked the onlookers. "Hardly so. He is a practised machine-gunner, and the mark is bigger than a barn, let alone a barn door."

If he was hitting, as seemed probable by the roc's change of direction, he was not hurting him, much less frightening him; for the hunted became the hunter, circled up, swooped, and knocked Perelli and his plane out of all balance to the ground. Plainly the machine-gun bullets did not wound. It was important to learn why.

The problem had now become much more difficult. It was bad enough when the rocs merely outflew the aviators. Much worse when the machine-gun, the only handy weapon, was not powerful enough. The situation was very much as if a punitive expedition against African savages had been whipped on equal terms. One thing stood out as essential. We must get a dead roc. We must know how they were built, and what was the protective element that would turn fifty-caliber machine-gun bullets at two hundred yards.

All this I told Eddie Hartshorn, one of America's best flyers in the war. He had dropped in at A. R. C. (anti-roc-headquarters) to offer his services.

"I'll get one," he said. "I can get to one, anyway. And I'll make sure of him."

"How?"

"Ram him."

I am glad to say that I was not such a fool as to make the banal answer, "You won't come back." He could hardly have expected to do that.

Hartshorn's offer was accepted, and he was provided with the largest and heaviest plane in the country. He took it to the most likely point, but made the pertinent comment, "Rocs do not fly to order. I'll bet some one will beat me to this."

Someone did. As soon as the hundreds of flyers heard of his idea each one telephoned to A. R. C., "There is no copyright on Hartshorn's scheme. I'm going to try it if I can." That is, everyone but one. It never occurred to Lieutenant Roy Anderson, son of General C. P. Anderson, U. S. Army, who was the scion of a line of soldiers that had served in every war of the republic, that he should volunteer. That went without saying to him.

He sighted the roc, went up after it in the way that poor Perelli had shown safe, and hit him at a speed of a hundred and seventy-five miles an hour.

This time the man scored. The great roc came fluttering and twisting to the ground, just like any little bird that has been shot. He was not dead, nor helpless by any means, but could not take the air again nor get on his feet. There he lay, thrashing and screaming, still a formidable object.

He had fallen near Springfield, Illinois, and the whole state started for the scene at once. Autos by the thousands, planes by the hundred.

jammed the roads and made the air unsafe. One intelligent spectator suggested keeping him alive and exhibiting him at five dollars a person.

"You're the kind of guy that would try to bag the Miami hurricane and run your windmill with it," commented the local policeman, who was first on the scene.

Everyone who had a shotgun, a revolver, or rifle brought it and emptied it at the fallen enemy. The effect was about the same as firing a pea-shooter at an elephant. A siege battery of artillery was started from Fort Sheridan. It was not needed, however, as a local well-digger blew the life out of the roc with dynamite. Before he did it there was an interruption. The well-digger had come as near as he dared, when the cry came: "Hold on, let me get away first." It was from Lieutenant Anderson, who had miraculously escaped. When the plane hit its target, he had taken the precaution to unstrap himself from his seat. He was catapulted onto the roc's back, where he landed in a mass of feathers.

It was not a soft bed, he at once found out. What looked like feathers were heavy, wire-like pendants, resembling so much steel wool. They formed a mass at least twelve inches thick, and as hard as iron. Their edges were sharp, and cut like knives. Anderson was a sight. His aviator's suit and gloves had saved him from being cut to pieces, but the feathers had gone right through them in many places, and slashed him all over his body. His face, unprotected, had been cut so that he had almost lost semblance of a human being.

"No wonder bullets can not hurt these birds," commented some officers who had reached the scene in planes. "Why, a down pillow will stop a shot from a revolver. It would take some missile to go through that mess."

THE United States Army had killed its first assailant in this novel war. It was now its business to find out what he was like. Soldiers and scientists took the fallen foe to pieces and made a thorough examination. It was not an easy job. "Like pulling a nest of knives to pieces," was the comment of one. "One false move, and you are slashed."

The publicity department of the army, now fully mobilized, issued a non-technical description in the form of a regular war bulletin. "The so-called roc is a bird, with reptilian traits. It is six hundred feet in spread of wing. Length of body, one hundred and seventy-five feet. It has five talons on each foot, twelve feet long and eighteen inches thick at the base. The bill is twenty feet long, and two feet through its substance in the thickest part. Feathers of tail, ninety feet. Eight inches through. The body is covered with short feathers, forming an armor impenetrable to anything but high explosives, or armor-piercing shells. Stomach contained the remains of several cattle, horses, and men. There was also much half-digested grain. Sex, female. Six partly formed eggs. Dissection was very difficult. Feathers, bill, etc., were so hard that only metal-working tools could be used."

We had now a fair idea of what we had to fight. The general public was much reassured. They were just big birds, after all. Artillery and bombs for them. See how quickly dynamite killed the one that had fallen.

I did not share the optimism. As I turned away from the scene, where I had been present as an observer for the general staff, I thought of the size, agility and resisting power of our foes. Above all, I considered what had not been thought worth while to put in the bulletin—the

great size and deep convolutions of the brain.

"We have seen that these birds can learn," I pondered. "What will they learn next? Our standard is what we call human intelligence. They are outside of this category. They have an intelligence of their own."

A council of war was called to determine the best way to fight the invaders in the light of our new knowledge.

"It is all very well to speak of artillery and dynamite," said one old general, "but we must get said artillery and dynamite on the ground. They do not come where we want them, nor wait for us to get to work. I have seen enough of the futility of anti-aircraft guns to know how difficult it will be to shoot them down." There was general agreement to this.

The chief of staff spoke: "I am afraid that the only thing for us to do is to keep on ramming them, as Anderson did. It will be a plane and a life for a roc, as of course we all recognize that Anderson's escape was a lucky accident. In general, the aviator will die with his victim. Gentlemen, we must carry on as he started. There will be plenty of volunteers. It really is our only chance."

The assent to this was almost as unanimous. I was the only exception. "Gentlemen," I said, "these rocs can learn. They will learn every time. The way to beat them is to devise an offensive that they can not meet. We hardly realize what a tremendous proposition we are up against. Why, their size and power are outside all our ideas. And the food they consume! Have you noticed that they have not carried away a child yet? Too small. I do not think they take a man unless they see him from an angle that gives an impression of size from his height.

"We must beat them at once. If we do not, they will see that we are living in a mechanical age and start one themselves. If they are holding more than even with their naked wings, beaks, and talons, what will they do if they start to make implements of war? They have the brains, but have never needed to live anything but the simple life.

"Think what they have done! I could plainly see that the big gash in the earth through which I entered their world has just been made by an earthquake. There inside they have been living. As Fowler and I have reported, they live off the meat of animals that are large to us but small and inoffensive to them. When they want them they strike them down with a blow. They know nothing about fighting, because they have never had to fight. The earthquake came, the earth opened above them, and they flew out. They encountered the most highly mechanized civilization in the world, with a people skilled in the arts of war. Yet so far they have beaten us almost every time.

"War! Why, it can be their game if they are not quickly checked. Look at my experience! The flying funnel which they improvised in their short pursuit. They wanted to catch me alive and my plane uninjured. A most difficult problem of warfare. If I had not had my geometrical maneuvers to fall back on I should now have been undergoing a mental examination in Rocland.

"The first thing for us to do is to mass our artillery and planes. The Middle West is really hostile country now. We are garrisoning it. It is not military practise to scatter garrisons in a hostile country unless it has been subdued. We should mobilize, and try to make some attacks. We shall hear from the rocs very soon, I am sure. That is, in a military way. We constantly, of course, hear of their raids on the defenseless

inhabitants. You may be sure that they will beat our ramming game."

My views provoked general dissent. The meeting was about to break up, and orders were to be sent out to ram every roc seen, when the telephone rang. As lowest in rank, I answered it. The news was bad. "Wait a minute, gentlemen," I said. "This is important."

What I heard was this: A girl's voice on the long distance. "Is this General Staff? I am Alice Chase, speaking from my home on my father's farm in Wade Crossing, South Dakota. I am giving a message from Captain James McCarthy, United States Army. He is badly wounded, and in the room with my mother holding him. He was just brought down with his plane by a roc. He says, 'Ramming won't work. Those birds can meet it without trouble. I got a good start after one, came close and he stooped, rose behind me, and sent me down. Remember, I made no mistakes, but I had no chance. Neither will anyone else who tries that line.'—Yes, mamma, I hear you.—My mother tells me that that poor soldier has just died in her arms. Oh, dear!"

THE chief of staff, when in France, had been nicknamed "Old Switcher." A judgment, to him, was something to revise. He lived up to his old reputation in the present emergency.

"Well, Latham," came his clear tones before I had fairly dropped the instrument, "it is plain that the ramming plan has failed. You have a plan, I know, or you would never have condemned that one. What is your idea?"

"Gentlemen," I replied, "I have suggested massing our forces. That, you will understand, is not a plan. It is merely to put them into position to carry out a plan.

"What we should do is to concentrate our principal mass of planes in overwhelming numbers. The principle is the old one of boys chasing squirrels. One squirrel can always keep on the side of a tree away from one boy. Usually a squirrel can elude two boys in the same fashion. But when three boys concentrate on one squirrel, he loses count. His faculties do not co-ordinate sufficiently to keep track of the three at once. And they get him in plain view and shoot him. That is what we should do to the rocs. Confuse them by numbers and they will fall an easy prey to bombs."

"Very good in theory," was the remark of the chief of aviation. "But you are proposing to use a large number of planes in a limited area. How are you going to keep them from ramming each other? How will they perform intricate and unexpected maneuvers in unison? How will they get orders? Will not every man be on his own?"

"My solution of this problem is one that I have hesitated to make known," I replied. "The fact is that I can run them myself. I propose to follow the force flying low in a heavily camouflaged machine. It will have an operator, a radio transmitting apparatus, and a large switchboard, which I shall work. Every plane will have a receiving outfit, with ear muffs on the aviator.

"The planes will be organized in squadrons, each machine of which will be in tune with the same plug on my board. All orders will be given by squadrons, which will operate as a unit under my orders. Coordinating their work will be a terrible strain on my brain, but I am confident that I can do it. I have made a special study of sky angles and their relation to planes (geometrical planes, you will understand). They are the foundation of all airplane maneuvering."

"I can indorse what Latham says about airplanes and air angles," broke in the assistant chief of staff,

under whom I had served abroad. "I once saw him save the airplane he drove by manipulating it in different planes of air until he made three German aviators dizzy."

By a unanimous vote I was given charge of the battle formations that were to combat the rocs in their own element. I at once began to drill them. The work was very complicated, even though I had it all my own way, in the absence of the enemy. Neither I nor anyone else had commanded and maneuvered an air army, and new problems arose at every moment.

Meantime the emergency had brought about one gratifying result. The human race had solidified against the foe. It was very plain that though the United States was the present sufferer, it was so only because its turn had come first. The rocs, everyone knew, would cross oceans without difficulty.

Accordingly offers of assistance poured in. England and France, without preliminaries, shipped the great air fleets they had gathered to fight men, to save humanity. President Von Hindenburg of Germany bluntly commented, "If the French and English can send their war planes, we can give our passenger machines." The many planes forming Germany's network of air routes were thereupon put upon Atlantic liners, to join her former foes. All the great war aviators from all countries volunteered for service, and swarmed to America. It was noted that the former foes were more chummy than those who had fought together. Frenchmen teamed up with Germans and Germans with Englishmen. "Sure," said an English ace, "why shouldn't we? We didn't bore each other so much." Soviet Russia sent a large contingent.

The foreigners readily accepted my idea of a central direction, and started drilling at once.

My great need from the first was for someone who could quickly make intricate mathematical computations. The mass of such work was very great. Many able computers were available for the ground work, but none was competent to dispose of a problem when fast figuring was necessary. The need was fortunately and effectively supplied in unexpected fashion.

The chief of staff called up, saying, "I'm sending you a mathematical wizard. We have been trying him on everything from calculus to multiplication, and he can do anything. He will be all right if you can keep the girls away from him. Some sheik! Wait for Lieutenant Arthur Andrews."

The "sheik" arrived in a few minutes, and proved just what I wanted. The caution about the girls was needed. A party of rather haughty Red Cross nurses of high social standing were visiting the camp on business. All the lady-killers of whatever rank had been repulsed with a total loss. Someone was remarking that it was the coldest day in years, when Andrews hove in sight. The thermometer went up like a shot. Some of the nurses gurgled, and some giggled. Mr. Andrews, on the contrary, was not in the least interested. He never looked at the charmers, but came directly to my office, and reported.

He was all that the chief had represented, and more. "You are said to be a quick worker at problems," I informed him. "That is all very well, but what I need is someone who is good at averages. My typical case is like this: one hundred and sixty planes are flying at a given height and interval. They sight ten rocs at irregular distances, which we compute at once. Where will they meet? I'm going to set you that to work as quickly as possible."

In solving that problem in his head, by the law of averages, and closely

approximating the slow mathematical computation, he solved the other, of who was to be my assistant, my other self.

The first air division soon began to take a shape as a unit. It was composed of American and foreign flyers, most of them with reputations gained in the late unpleasantness. On February 22nd, George Washington's birthday, it first came in contact with the enemy. Two rocs were sighted near Fort Worth, Texas, while the division was maneuvering.

My squirrel idea was correct. Forty planes circling above, with thirty behind, in front, and on each side, bewildered the great birds. They were smartly bombed, and blown to pieces with no loss on our side. A victory, but there were many rocs. And they had never failed to learn from each setback. We kept on training. In April there were six thousand plane units in service, roughly one-half American, the rest foreign. I commanded corps, armies, and army groups of aerial units.

My assistant, now Captain Andrews, was invaluable. We soon came to be on most friendly terms. Some of his ways were rather queer. One day I found it necessary to explain to him that the duties of a military secretary were not exactly universal.

"Say, Andrews, a secretary is supposed to take care of his chief's money, to stall off girls ('I haven't seen any girls bothering you,' he murmured) and to do most of his work. But he is not expected to censor his toothbrushes. You are responsible for this new one, are you not? Nobody but a wife can throw away a man's toothbrush. And although you bully your superior officer like a wife, you are obviously not that."

"I should hope not!" came in a tone that struck me as very curious. It was not until Andrews blushed when a British aviator asked him if he was related to his old friend, Arthur Andrews, that I suspected anything. He denied any relationship, which was true enough. True because, according to his papers, he was Lieutenant Andrews, himself, once of the British Army. Andrews had come to America after the war, become naturalized, and joined the reserves as a lieutenant. Another of my problems to work out.

Whatever its solution, it did not require action. Arthur was brave, wonderfully efficient, and his work had become a necessary complement of my own. It was safe enough to keep him, as the spy problem did not exist in this war. Whatever his reasons for taking another man's name, they were obviously patriotic. And I liked him.

The fact was, that Arthur Andrews was Alice Chase. The real Andrews had hastily put on his uniform when Captain McCarthy went after a roc, as I have already told. There had been no record of his presence. When the plane crashed, he was instantly killed, and Miss Chase did not discover his body until she had reported McCarthy's death. Alice was the star mathematician at the University of Minnesota. She had made up her mind that she could serve her country in its emergency; so she put on Andrews' uniform, and took his name.

I very soon began to suspect that there was something different about Andrews. It was very pleasant to sit close to "him" in the course of business. That could come from friendship. But one day when I found that I liked it when "he" stood back of me and happened to breathe on my neck, I had a revelation. The so-called Andrews was a girl.

"Well, she is such an essential helper that it is my duty to my country to keep her. I hope she is not married. On the whole, I don't think so. That toothbrush incident would never have happened unless the young lady meant to take possession."

Meantime, there were sterner things to confront. The rocs were raiding every day, and gradually the radius of their activities was becom-

ing enlarged. They invaded the East, the Pacific Coast, and Mexico. Our concentrated forces seldom came in contact with them. We really wished no indecisive actions. They were too much for us unless we were in force.

I KEPT drilling all day and working out angles and the relations of airplanes and geometrical plane levels at night. It was an inspiring sight to view the maneuvers of a plane army, and to know that I had it under the control of my voice.

"Section 16, Second Division, drop to four thousand feet," I would command. And twenty planes obeyed like one. "Sections 4, 7, 12, First Division, raise speed to one hundred twenty." Sixty planes shot out in front of their companions who were doing one hundred miles an hour. "Second Division, thirty degrees east." An argosy swung.

We were soon to be challenged. A perfect April morning over the Kansas prairies. A grand maneuver of the Second Aerial Army before the President! And a delegation of distinguished foreign soldiers and statesmen. Marshal Petain and General Von Seeckt, first commander of the German Reichswehr, were to criticize.

"Not our kind of fighting at all," they had said, rather doubtful of much ability to help. "We are familiar enough with the use of planes as auxiliaries, but as first and second lines—well, we are not used to it." They reveled, however, in my mathematical calculations, and were interested in hearing Andrews' replies to posers.

Fighting seemed a long distance away as we climbed into our direction plane, which had been specially camouflaged. It was above all things essential that my plane keep in action. I was the sole directing force. I had attempted to run the air army as one on land is directed, by a staff and subordinates. The attempt had proved a complete failure. Orders were misinterpreted. Others reached the wrong units. Several planes had collided, with casualties. One-man direction was the only way, in the present status of planes and radio, that an air army could be run. So I must take no chances. The duty of others might be to die for their country. I must, above all, live for her.

The one thousand planes of the World's Second Army took the air. Did you ever see a flock of pigeons turn, twist, rise, bend, fall, change direction as though directed by a single mind? That had been my ideal of direction. I had always kept that flock in mind, with, of course, the difference that my pigeons must be far apart. In some degree the ideal had been reached. It was a beautiful sight when the planes soared, fluttered, turned, changed distance, spread out, came together.

At the same instant, everyone seemed to espy the enemy. Shouts from the ground, signals from planes, booming of guns, reached my ears. It was an attack in force. With the intelligence that was all their own, the great birds had organized an air army. Ninety-eight were counted in the raid. They, too, could maneuver. No flock of pigeons ever worked together better.

At the first swoop, I saw sixty planes crash. This was my rough guess, from the vacancies I saw in the battle formation. Really, fifty-five came down. It was an unexpected raid, but that was what I had prepared against. This was where my work on geometrical planes was to count. The second World's Air Army, which had been in orderly array on the seven thousand foot level, under my quickly radioed orders, seemed to break up into unrelated units. Some climbed to fifteen thousand feet. From that level they were distributed at thousand foot intervals, down to six thousand feet. Some soared, others dipped. Some swung around in great circles, some in small. The

seeming confusion was what I had counted on to puzzle our opponents. Maintaining it, and carrying the whole geometrical figure in my head, was a task that taxed my brains to the limit. And it was a figure that had to be constantly changing in all its parts. My practise and thorough preparation, along with a certain native aptitude for visualizing circles, angles, and geometrical planes enabled me to keep my seeming disorder orderly. On the ground below, many observers thought the army was in a panic. Not so the President, and Generals Petain and Von Seeckt. Their cool heads, although they could not follow the whole design, comprehended that a plan was working.

The rocs made another dash, this time at the twelve thousand foot level. The failure to be above all was their undoing. At thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen thousand feet were sections, their planes loaded with bombs. Those near by threw them with their hands. At a greater distance they were discharged from grenade guns. The birds, spreading six hundred feet from wing tip to wing tip, were easy targets. The bombs were so powerful that the feather armament was ripped wherever it was hit.

The slaughter was fearful, and not only among the rocs. In the first place, the planes on various levels were fairly close together. Any bomb that missed had a good chance to bring down a friend. The rocs, too, were busy in defeat. They took heavy toll of their enemies.

Unfortunately a great crowd had gathered to see the maneuver, and the attack was made just above the assemblage. Such bombs as did not hit a roc or a plane exploded when they struck the ground. When the planes crashed, they added to the quota of civilian casualties. And such rocs as were not blown to pieces, but had to come down because of broken wings, slashed and bit everyone in sight.

It may be imagined that I was too much occupied to see much of this. In fact, I was so busy that at the last moment, when all the rocs I could see had been disposed of, I nearly emulated General Desaix at the battle of Marengo by dying in the moment of victory. My secretary, as usual, was on the job and very unwilling that I should become a dead hero.

I had overlooked the last two rocs, but they had not overlooked me. The camouflage had been an efficient protection all the morning. But some freak of the noonday sun must have disclosed it to the last survivors. While I was bringing the army down to earth, they stooped. I heard a cry from Andrews into the transmitter, "Sections 9, 11, Third Division, to two thousand foot level, and bomb." Neither rocs nor sections had far to go. The attackers struck our plane at the same time that three bombs hit them. Down we all came, luckily without smashing the fuselage. We were safe.

We had won the first real battle. Whose would be the final victory? It was a more important question than in the wars of men. With those, even a complete conquest and annexation had meant the absorption of the winner by the loser, as in the case of the Roman Empire and the Norman invasion of England. The roc absorption would be physical. They would eat us.

"Well, anyhow, it will take them some time to become mechanized," wrote one popular commentator. "The Occident has been at it a century and a half, and it took the clever Japs forty years just to copy." We of Mankind's General Staff, now our official title, were not so sure. Soldiers know that there is such a thing as resourcefulness and improvization. We credited the rocs with it.

THERE was a puzzling occurrence a week after the battle. Just two raids, but they picked the largest munition factory in the country for

them. The plant was in the mountains of West Virginia and made airplane bombs for roc battles. A day later an equal number came back and rummaged around.

"We worked in wooden sheds, flimsy affairs, and lots of them," said a woman worker who saw both raids. "That is so that an explosion will not wreck the whole plant. When the rocs came back they smashed the sheds just by their weight. They spent a long time peering around and gathering up tools, and so far as I could make out, raw material. It was very hard for them. The tools are small and made for men and women. The raw material was in steel pigs, bags of saltpeter, boxes of fuses and the like. They seemed to know what they wanted, but they had an awful time getting it away. The tools, boxes, rods, and pigs kept slipping out of their beaks and claws. They left a regular trail behind them, but probably got away with the heft of it."

"Looks like one of the trench raids we used to put over on each other in the late unpleasantness," commented Major Kramer, whose point of view in that conflict had been toward the American forces. Now it was parallel. "Remember, we would raid each others' lines for prisoners and shake them down for information?" We on the staff agreed with him, but the general public thought the raid was merely another one for food and to satisfy curiosity.

"Mankind" was preparing for battle. It would have to be a battle, too. We of the military knew that there would be no short cut. The popular idea was the much dreaded gas. "Cover them with a blanket of it. Send all the planes we can get together loaded with gas bombs, and drop them at a given signal. Every living thing in Rocland will die." This read well, and sounded well in conversation, but Rocland covered about three hundred thousand square miles, and there was not enough gas in the world to blanket more than a corner of it.

"We shall have to fight it out, plane to roc," said our commander. "Just now it will be against bare claws and beaks, but if we wait too long, they will mechanize themselves, and we shall have no chance. I think we can get ready for our invasion of the North in a couple of months, and that we should make haste even to the point of taking chances. We have nothing but an air force. No other could get near Rocland.

We were left unmolested in our preparations. Whether at night ominous shadows that might have been clouds were roc scouts "thinking in" on our deliberations, as in the old wars men had similarly worked and listened in on enemy wireless and telephone, was matter for conjecture. We really did not know whether the thought transference of our adversaries worked equally well at a distance, or only near by. The general opinion was that distance made for confusion of thought, and that there was need of a certain concentration obtainable only at close quarters. This point has never been cleared up, and it will be impossible ever to tell whether or not there were spies in the air.

SUDDENLY, after two months, there were indications from Alaska of a great enemy offensive, and of the dreaded mechanical kind. On June 10, 1930, the cable from Nome stopped working. Ice or tangled whale was at first supposed to be the reason. When, in addition, the local wireless station did not answer, the world was sure that something had happened to Nome. Ships in the neighborhood also failed to answer wireless messages. Next day there was a glimpse of light. Sergeant Hopkins, of the Canadian Mounted Police, broadcast this message from McFarland Post, a lonely station on the Arctic: "Troopers O'Connor and Jones just died suddenly, seemingly overcome by some kind of gas. I am feeling faint

and think I got a whiff. Am afraid to go near where they are on the shore, about two hundred yards from here. Am going across wind to try and get away from the danger. Hopkins."

Two days later a gas-masked figure in a motorboat turned up at Tyro Point, an American fishing-station on Bering Sea, one hundred and fifty miles from Nome. He was Albert Ludlow, the only survivor of the population of that once flourishing American town. Ludlow told the story of how the city was gassed.

"I had served overseas and always been very careful of gas," he said. "My mask had been a good friend in France, and I packed it along wherever I went for ten years. Luckily for me, too. Two days ago I was in my room looking out of the window at the sun, which was getting a little low, about nine o'clock. The usual summer evening Arctic baseball game was going on in the lots across the street. The center fielder had just started after a fly when he dropped in his tracks, clutched at his throat for a second, and then ceased to move. Then the first baseman dropped in the same way. There was the usual knot of spectators to the right of the home plate in the general direction from center field on through the first baseman's position. Before anyone could run to the aid of the players the spectators began to drop, too, clutching at their throats, and then relaxing.

"My war training served then. Hardly by thought, but more by instinct, I grabbed my mask from my bureau drawer, and put it on. Old as it was, it worked and kept out the gas, thank heaven. It was needed, too. In the few seconds that had elapsed, the gas—of what kind I don't know, nor where it came from—had spread from the one narrow line it had taken first, and was in many sectors. Bound by invisible lines, people were living and dying. They could not see it, and I heard them yell that they could smell nothing. Up the street one block was full of life, the next of death. People did not know what to do. The death essence was spreading. If they ran, they would probably run into it. If they stayed still, it would come to them. I saw no one else with a gas mask. Some cool individuals saved themselves for a time by running down the lanes of life, keeping as far from where the dead were on each side as possible, and taking a course down wind. Even these were gradually caught as the main body of the gas, of which the lanes of death were the feelers, gradually spread solidly over the city.

"I waited until this happened, and then started down wind with the fleeing citizens. Some were running as fast as they could. Some were on bicycles, some in automobiles, but within half an hour the gas had caught up to them. As I trudged along the coast I first came upon the slow runners, the women, the old and weak. Next the bicyclists, who had fallen from their wheels. Last were the automobiles, whose occupants, as they were overcome, had lost control. Some machines had run out into the waves until their carbureters were flooded; others had smashed against some obstacle, driftwood, or sandbank. One was still running a shaky course in a clear space of beach. All the refugees, afoot, awheel, in motor, were dead. Obviously everyone in the city was dead, too. My job was to get out if I could. I could not wear a gas mask forever. This motorboat was in a cove with someone who had evidently been its owner lying dead where he had been cranking the motor. I started it, and ran down the coast to this settlement. I have worn my gas mask all the time. Until I saw you people alive and unruffled I had no means of knowing whether there was gas in the air or not. Those roes must have sent it. They certainly learn fast."

THE stories of Ludlow and the Canadian policeman stirred up the gas propagandists. "Suffocate the rocs, or they will suffocate us," was the cry. It was a difficult one to answer, but it was impossible to do. Facts are stubborn things, and there was not enough gas in the possession of the human race. A quick offensive was the only resource.

Mankind was able to muster six thousand planes near enough to Rocland to reach it with gasoline enough for maneuvering. Each was loaded to its limit with high explosive and gas bombs. We did not know how many rocs there were. A mere guess by Fowler and me was that there were fifty thousand grown ones. Our bombs were so powerful that if we could get among them we could make havoc.

The expedition started on July 16th from its Canadian base. I headed the advance guard, composed of squadrons by nationality. "No sign of rocs," I said to my chief of staff. Captain Andrews promoted.

"No, sir, and there hasn't been for weeks," was the reply. "They must have something up their sleeves—I mean wing feathers."

The miles rolled by, and still there were no rocs. We neared their country, but were unopposed.

"No scouts," I said.

"Looks very peculiar," came the answer.

Even when we reached the great depression, with its warmth-giving volcanic pillars, there was the same silence. As we passed the brow of the precipice, ready for action, we were still unopposed. We had been flying high, but now took lower levels for action. As we did so, we saw rocs, plenty of them, but strangely inert. Other animals, too, megatheriums, mastodons, mammoths, rhinoceroses, all the abundant fauna that the birds had bred just as we do cattle, to eat, were scattered over the ground. They, too, were all silent.

"Dead!" I yelled into the wireless phone. "Dead!" shrieked the pilots of six thousand planes, each into his phone.

Who or what had done our work for us?

It plainly was safe to land. Nothing in Rocland could hurt us now. The air was pure, but the attitudes of the dead suggested gassing.

The land animals lay in all attitudes, some of them pitched on their sides, some with their necks twisted under them, those of the elephant family on all four knees. The mother rocs had stuck to their eggs or young, as they were sitting or brooding. Their forms towered up, not unlike giant statues of resting eagles, their heads settled in on their breasts. The eggs or young could be dimly seen under the mother that had unavailingly attempted to protect them with her life. Many of the other rocs had similarly been overcome on the ground, or at low altitudes, where their buoyancy had permitted the inert body to sink to the earth without damage. Others had been flying high when the death wisp caught them. These had fallen thousands of feet and were horribly smashed.

A surgeon performed a short autopsy on a dead mastodon. It was a small one, but at that he had to have the help of a couple of company butchers. He reported that it had been overcome by some kind of gas.

OUR expedition pressed on in regular flying order, encountering nothing but the dead. About three hundred miles from the boundary of the country of the rocs, I descried a prostrate form that was smaller than the rest. "A man," was my guess. A look through the field glasses confirmed it. We were now probably in a position to find out what had happened. "Dead men tell no tales" is a proverb that is useful only to thieves. The body was lying on its back, about five hundred yards from a ragged hole in the ground that was,

I judged, about two hundred yards across.

Just as I had hoped, this man did tell his tale—not by word of mouth, but by a diary he had kept until the instant of death. The book, of the pocket variety, was just where it had dropped from his left hand. On the cover was tooled, "James P. Black, Hardy Springs, West Virginia." January 1st to April 15th, 1930, told the story of the organization of the munition plant that had been raided by the rocs. Black was the general manager. He had been appointed in the late fall, strictly on his merits as a master of both theory and practise in the manufacture of bombs. April 15th was the date of the roc raid on the arsenal. He made his entry for that day on the sixteenth, when a captive.

April 15. I am making this entry a day late. Yesterday I was not too busy but much too helpless to write. At nine o'clock in the morning my chauffeur was driving me around the plant in an open car when something swooped. I was grabbed, not very roughly, but in a viselike grip, and carried off. I saw the chauffeur on the ground with a rip that had almost cut him in two. The roc (it was easy to guess that) snatched several workers and flew away with us. I thought of Fowler, who had been carried away, and afterward rescued, and wondered if his luck would be mine. Not very likely. We landed last night as the sun was low. The date and the location of Rocland made me guess that it was about nine o'clock, which I confirmed from my watch, uninjured. It was a long hard flight for us and the rocs as well. I was so stiff that I could hardly move for a while. Our captor, when he dropped us, tried to hop away, but fell over on his side, unable to keep his feet. Just like those of smaller beings, they had gone to sleep from the cramped position in holding on to us. We were at once surrounded at a distance of a hundred feet (they were too big to form a closer circle) by several birds, who looked as though they were there for business and not for curiosity. I soon found that I was right. My thought was, "They are smart, but not smart enough. They raided the bomb factory, and got the super and some good workmen, all right. But we can do nothing with our bare hands and with no raw material. It looks as though there were saltpeter and other minerals here, at that." The rocs looked at each other, and all flew away at once, leaving only two guards. What a fool I had been! I had forgotten Fowler's tale of thought transference, and had been given the third degree without any trouble. I had betrayed the human race. Unpleasant thought, but I was so tired that I soon went to sleep.

April 16. They have herded up the captives. A couple of hundred, and a bunch of the best workmen I had. We are going to make bombs or die, I guess. Just ate megatherium meat. One of the boys had seen a reproduction of a fossil once in a museum, and recognized it when a roc drove it up, waddling along on its piano legs. The roc gave it a contemptuous cuff, which ripped off its six-foot head, and left it for us. There was plenty of brush for a fire, and of course most of the boys had matches. We had a good meal soon. There is always someone who can cook well in a bunch of first class mechanics.

April 17. Just as I guessed. I have betrayed the human race. Those rocs beat it as soon as I had those fool thoughts about being unable to do anything with bare hands, and raided the plant again for tools and material. I am afraid I shall have to save my life by working for the enemy. So will the rest. One thing is sure. Whatever I do must be on impulse. I must not think. I thought once and see what happened! I may be able to do some good, if I keep my mind free from plans.

April 18. We are at work, making bombs for our enemies. I have no excuse. I should hate to copy Talleyrand's answer to the question what he did during the Reign of Terror: "I lived."

April 19. "This is a stock country," said a Texas cowboy last night. "And they know how to raise it. All fat and in fine condition." "That is right," remarked Ignatieff, once of Russia. "These roc have improved the breeds. I have seen the mammoths in the museum at Leningrad. They are not half so big as these twenty-five-foot-high brutes with sides squared out, no hollows, and lots of meat. Look at their tusks, too. Almost bred out. I have not seen a pair more than three feet long, and two-thirds have no tusks at all. Why, the mammoths and mastodons in museums have them sticking out six or eight feet! No good at all for eating, so they have bred them away."

April 20. Wandered away three or four miles from our camp, which is in a cave near one of the chimneys that heat up the place. No restrictions after I had done a fair day's work. There are sentinels all around, and they can see much farther than I could go in a day. Came upon something peculiar. A piece of ground that looked like geyser land. I could not get very close, because there was a roc sentinel. He was a couple of hundred yards away himself, and would not let me go any closer. Thought it was some secret at first, and then noticed that, near a small, low mound of stones, there were several dead animals. I at once saw why the sentinel was keeping me away. He was not guarding a secret, but protecting us. Some kind of gas was evidently escaping, and it was fatal to life. Anything to do about it? I must not think! I must not plan! Remember what happened before when I thought! I betrayed my kind! Heaven grant that these birds can only penetrate the conscious mind. If they can enter my sub-conscious thoughts, I am helpless! I can not control those.

April 21-30. I have been too busy to make any entries, and must lump them for the last days of this month. Wish I was home! We are working away at bombs, and shall have some ready soon. Nice job we are doing. These birds will be able to use them as well as we can. They speak our language; that is, the universal language of thought. It needs no words or translation. They understand our methods and have helped us mine and do heavy work, the kind for which power is needed. Power enough in them! Writing of language, they do not seem to have any. Perhaps they had one once, but with their thought-reading have forgotten it. Only the young ones make a noise. And they certainly make enough. I have made remarks about the lack of discipline in American families, but our children are angelic compared to those of the roc. From the moment they come out of their ten-foot eggs they are up to something. They are strong enough in a few days to kill any animal in the country, and, but for sentinels everywhere, they would. The old ones have their work cut out for them. Strange to say, however, they seem to get over their youthful cussedness. I have not seen any row among the grown-ups. What a lovely fight two of them would put up if they did get in an argument! Talk about roosters! Six hundred feet spread of wings. How the feathers would fly!

This is a civilization of intellect only. These birds, with their wonderful brains, live on the ground. They have no fires, no improvements whatever. They have built nothing, developed nothing, except the breed of food animals. Yet they have their thoughts, their customs of life, take wives and husbands, and live peaceably and without work. The hoboes' dream, one would say, but they are

not hoboes. They have learned to control every instinct, to think, but not to do.

Not my idea at all. I like to work, to be creating and changing things. My characteristics can be judged by my clothes, that is, if you know the Secret. They are a little idea of the secretary of War, given when he put me in charge of the works at $75,000 a year!

"Wear light-colored sporty clothes, and if I catch you with them dirty I shall know that you have been putting your hands into the work and fire you. You are the big boss, and your job is to keep your hands off and your eyes on." So I still have on my "working-clothes"—a light gray hat, a pair of sport shoes, a white shirt, and a gray suit. They are dirty now, and I have my hands in the work.

May 1. All these roc sentries over animals, gas holes, children, and us must rather welcome the work. I realized this from a remark of a rather tough fuse-tester who is not particularly fond of keeping busy: "Talk about slow places! This is deader than any tank town I was ever in. You say that these birds have probably been here for many thousands of years, doing nothing but sit around and think? They have had things all their own way, and never had to work? Wotta life! Just watchin' the animals. This war must be a relief to them."

May 2. I have found out why they are so anxious to get on the earth. This country is going to freeze up, and they must leave. Until the crust about them fell in, doubtless burying many, it was warm enough, but the chimneys, or dying volcanoes, had been going fast. I noticed as I was being carried in, that the vegetation around the borders was dying, evidently bitten by frosts. There is a chimney a few miles from our camp that has just gone out. In a year or so this whole country will be arctic. All the life is huddling closer and closer to the center, near which we are. It is just a population and stock center at that. No buildings, nothing made by living beings, except our rude bomb plant, the first mechanical effort in this land of pure intellectuality.

May 3-30. Still busy bomb-making. There has been a failure. Some misunderstanding about where tests should be held, and as a result a premature explosion. Six men were killed, and one roc lost a foot. They understand now that there must be a clear open space for tests.

June 5. A large tract of land in the neighborhood of the gas hole has been selected for the tests. We are transporting a number of bombs there, and expect to hold the tests soon. The ground around there is somewhat hollow under foot, but that will not stop the tests. I almost thought!

June 8. We hold the tests today. A number of bombs are scattered over several hundred yards near the gas hole, and we shall learn a lot about our bombs and their effects.

My business is to make and test the bombs, and not to think about effects. All is ready. My detonator is connected to a whole string of bombs. Hurrah! I did not think!

HERE the diary ended abruptly. The heroic Black had detonated his charges, and died. The manner of his death, however, was different from the expectation that he must have entertained in his sub-conscious mind. The result was much better than he had had a right to expect. What such a trained engineer as he was would have forecast was a cataclysmic explosion of the gases that were underneath the neighborhood. This would have destroyed all life for many miles around, and made a much larger hole in the ground than the one we found, which was only about two hundred yards across. The destruction would, however, have been only a calamity to the rocs. It would not have extin-

guished life in more than a few hundred square miles, and Rocland was larger than Texas. Most of its formidable population would have been free and well, and we should have had to fight them.

What happened was this: The gas was deadly, but, possibly something like helium, not explosive. All the material destruction was caused by the powerful, well-made bombs, which ripped a great hole in the ground. The gas streamed out, with, we may well imagine, the force of a moderate tornado. It quickly covered all of Rocland, and, as we saw, killed everything in that territory, which is, by now, almost a part of the conventional arctic regions.

The gassing of Nome and the Canadian post were due to clouds carried in their direction by a freak of the wind. The rest of the gas has been lost in the atmosphere of the earth. It was just a pocket below the land of the rocs, and all of it came out at once, as proved by the pure atmosphere we found a few days later.

The heroic James P. Black was buried in Arlington, and his diary is in the Congressional Library.

As for me, I was now free to take up my private concerns and wasted no time in going about them. The first concern was with my chief of staff.

"Captain Andrews, where is your Adam's apple?" I asked, pointing at a very pretty neck.

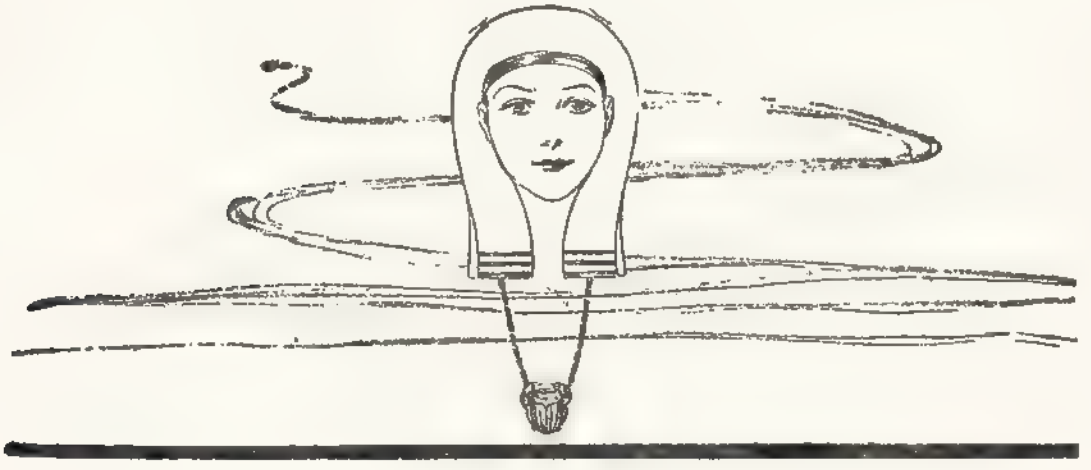
"I am not the kind of a person that has an Adam's apple," was the quick answer. "And my name is not Captain Andrews any more; it is Alice Chase."

"Well, Alice Chase, will you change your name again, permanently and quickly?" was what I considered quite a snappy reply.

"Of course I will. Haven't I been taking care of you for months? Do you think I am going to give up the job?"

So for the first time in the history of the United States Army, two of its officers married each other. The newspaper photographers were much disgruntled because Alice wore a gown and veil instead of her uniform.

"So commonplace," they said.



The Nightmare Tarn

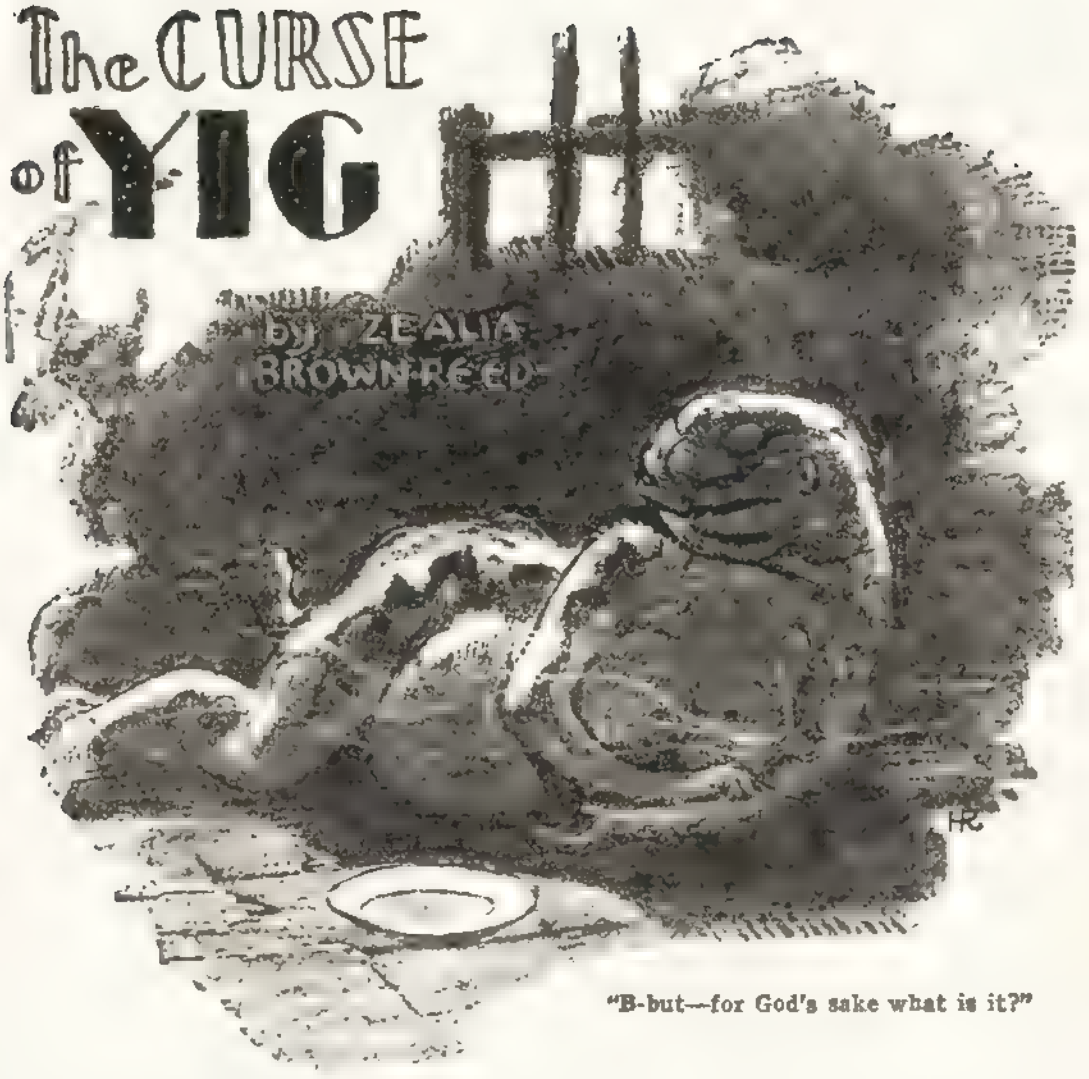
By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

I sat beside the moonless tarn alone,
In darkness where a mumbling air was blown—
A molded air, insufferably fraught
With dust of plundered charnels: there was naught
In this my dream but darkness and the wind,
The blowing dust, the stagnant waters blind,
And trees unknown, or pines or cypresses,
Wherefrom a rain of ashes weariless
At whiles fell on me, or was driven by
To feed the tongueless tarn; within the sky
The stars were like a failing phosphor wan
In gutted tombs wherefrom the worms have gone.
But though the dust and ashes in one cloud
Blinded and stifled me as might a shroud,
And though the foul putrescent waters gave
Upon my face the fetors of the grave,
As if therein some rout of skeletons
Had washed the worm-spared tatters from their bones,
Though all was black corruption, and despair,
I could not stir, like mandrake rooted there,
And with mine every breath I seemed to raise
The burden of some charnel of old days,
Where, tier by tier, the leaden coffins lie.

While sluggish black eternities went by,
I waited; on the darkness of my dream
There fell nor lantern-flame nor lightning-gleam,
Nor any gleam of moon or sun; the wind,
Withdrawn as in some sighing tomb, declined,
And all the dust was fallen; the waters drear
Lay still as blood of corpses. Loud and near,
The cry of one who drowned in her despair
Came to me from the filthy tarn; the air
Shuddered thereat, and all my heart was grown
A place of fears the nether hell might own,
And prey to monstrous wings and beaks malign:
For, lo! the voice, O dearest love, was thine!
And I—I could not stir: the dreadful weight
Of tomb on ancient tomb accumulate,
Lay on my limbs, and stifled all my breath,
And when I strove to cry, the dust of death
Had choked my mouth, nor any whisper came
To answer thee, who called upon my name!

The CURSE of YIG

by ZEALIA BROWN REED



"B-but—for God's sake what is it?"

IN 1925 I went into Oklahoma looking for snake lore, and I came out with a fear of snakes that will last me the rest of my life. I admit it is foolish, since there are natural explanations for everything I saw and heard, but it masters me none the less. If the old story had been all there was to it, I would not have been so badly shaken. My work as an American Indian ethnologist has hardened me to all kinds of extravagant legendry, and I know that simple white people can beat the redskins at their own game when it comes to fanciful inventions. But I can't forget what I saw with my own eyes at the insane asylum in Guthrie.

I called at that asylum because a few of the oldest settlers told me I would find something important there. Neither Indians nor white men would discuss the snake-god legends I had come to trace. The oil-boom newcomers, of course, knew nothing of such matters, and the red men and old pioneers were plainly frightened when I spoke of them. Not more than six or seven people mentioned the asylum, and those who did were careful to talk in whispers. But the whisperers said that Dr. McNeill could

show me a very terrible relic and tell me all I wanted to know. He could explain why Yig, the half-human father of serpents, is a shunned and feared subject in central Oklahoma, and why old settlers shiver at the secret Indian orgies which make the autumn days and nights hideous with the ceaseless beating of tom-toms in lonely places.

It was with the scent of a hound on the trail that I went to Guthrie, for I had spent many years collecting data on the evolution of serpent-worship among the Indians. I had always felt, from well defined undertones of legend and archeology, that great Quetzalcoatl—benign snake-god of the Mexicans — had had an older and darker prototype; and during recent months I had well-nigh proved it in a series of researches stretching from Guatemala to the Oklahoma plains. But everything was tantalizing and incomplete, for above the border the cult of the snake was hedged about by fear and furtiveness.

Now it appeared that a new and copious source of data was about to dawn, and I sought the head of the asylum with an eagerness I did not try to cloak. Dr. McNeill was a small, clean-shaven man of somewhat advanced years, and I saw at once from his speech and manner that he was a scholar of no mean attainments in many branches outside his profession. Grave and doubtful when I first made known my errand, his face grew thoughtful as he carefully scanned my credentials and the letter of introduction which a kindly old ex-Indian agent had given me.

"So you've been studying the Yig-legend, eh?" he reflected sententiously. "I know that many of our Oklahoma ethnologists have tried to connect it with Quetzalcoatl, but I don't think any of them have traced the intermediate steps so well. You've done remarkable work for a man as young as you seem to be, and you certainly deserve all the data we can give.

"I don't suppose old Major Moore or any of the others told you what it is I have here. They don't like to talk about it, and neither do I. It is very tragic and very horrible, but that is all. I refuse to consider it anything supernatural. There's a story about it that I'll tell you after you see it—a devilish sad story, but one that I won't call magic. It merely shows the potency that belief has over some people. I'll admit there are times when I feel a shiver that's more than physical, but in daylight I set all that down to nerves. I'm not a young fellow any more, alas!

"To come to the point, the thing I have is what you might call a victim of Yig's curse — a physically living victim. We don't let the bulk of the nurses see it, although most of them know it's here. There are just two steady old chaps whom I let feed it and clean out its quarters—used to be three, but good old Stevens passed on a few years ago. I suppose I'll have to break in a new group pretty soon; for the thing doesn't seem to age or change much, and we old boys can't last forever. Maybe the ethics of the near future will let us give it a merciful release, but it's hard to tell.

"Did you see that single ground-glass basement window over in the east wing when you came up the drive? That's where it is. I'll take you there myself now. You needn't make any comment. Just look through the movable panel in the door and thank God the light isn't any stronger. Then I'll tell you the story—or as much as I've been able to piece together."

We walked downstairs very quietly, and did not talk as we threaded the corridors of the seemingly deserted basement. Dr. McNeill unlocked a gray-painted steel door, but it was only a bulkhead leading to a further stretch of hallway. At length he paused before a door marked B 116, opened a small observation panel which he could use only by standing

on tiptoe, and pounded several times upon the painted metal, as if to arouse the occupant, whatever it might be.

A faint stench came from the aperture as the doctor unclosed it, and I fancied his pounding elicited a kind of low, hissing response. Finally he motioned me to replace him at the peephole, and I did so with a causeless and increasing tremor. The barred, ground-glass window, close to the earth outside, admitted only a feeble and uncertain pallor; and I had to look into the malodorous den for several seconds before I could see what was crawling and wriggling about on the straw-covered floor, emitting every now and then a weak and vacuous hiss. Then the shadowed outlines began to take shape, and I perceived that the squirming entity bore some remote resemblance to a human form laid flat on its belly. I clutched at the door-handle for support as I tried to keep from fainting.

The moving object was almost of human size, and entirely devoid of clothing. It was absolutely hairless, and its tawny-looking back seemed subtly squamous in the dim, ghoulish light. Around the shoulders it was rather speckled and brownish, and the head was very curiously flat. As it looked up to hiss at me I saw that the beady little black eyes were damnably anthropoid, but I could not bear to study them long. They fastened themselves on me with a horrible persistence, so that I closed the panel gaspingly and left the creature to wriggle about unseen in its matted straw and spectral twilight. I must have reeled a bit, for I saw that the doctor was gently holding my arm as he guided me away. I was stuttering over and over again: "B-but for God's sake, *what is it?*"

Dr. McNeill told me the story in his private office as I sprawled opposite him in an easy-chair. The gold and crimson of late afternoon changed to the violet of early dusk, but still I sat awed and motionless. I resented every ring of the telephone and every whir of the buzzer, and I could have cursed the nurses and interns whose knocks now and then summoned the doctor briefly to the outer office. Night came, and I was glad my host switched on all the lights. Scientist though I was, my zeal for research was half forgotten amid such breathless ecstasies of fright as a small boy might feel when whispered witch-tales go the rounds of the chimney-corner.

IT SEEMS that Yig, the snake-god of the central plains tribes—presumably the primal source of the more southerly Quetzalcoatl or Kukulcan—was an odd, half-anthropomorphic devil of highly arbitrary and capricious nature. He was not wholly evil, and was usually quite well-disposed toward those who gave proper respect to him and his children, the serpents; but in the autumn he became abnormally ravenous, and had to be driven away by means of suitable rites. That was why the tom-toms in the Pawnee, Wichita, and Caddo country pounded ceaselessly week in and week out in August, September, and October; and why the medicine-men made strange noises with rattles and whistles curiously like those of the Aztecs and Mayas.

Yig's chief trait was a relentless devotion to his children—a devotion so great that the redskins almost feared to protect themselves from the venomous rattlesnakes which thronged the region. Frightful clandestine tales hinted of his vengeance upon mortals who flouted him or wreaked harm upon his wriggling progeny; his chosen method being to turn his victim, after suitable tortures, to a spotted snake.

In the old days of the Indian Territory, the doctor went on, there was not quite so much secrecy about Yig. The plains tribes, less cautious than the desert nomads and Pueblos, talked quite freely of their legends

and autumn ceremonies with the first Indian agents, and let considerable of the lore spread out through the neighboring regions of white settlement. The great fear came in the land-rush days of 'eighty-nine, when some extraordinary incidents had been rumored, and the rumors sustained, by what seemed to be hideously tangible proofs. Indians said that the new white men did not know how to get on with Yig, and afterward the settlers came to take that theory at face value. Now no old-timer in middle Oklahoma, white or red, could be induced to breathe a word about the snake-god except in vague hints. Yet after all, the doctor added with almost needless emphasis, the only truly authenticated horror had been a thing of pitiful tragedy rather than of bewitchment. It was all very material and cruel—even that last phase which had caused so much dispute.

Dr. McNeill paused and cleared his throat before getting down to his special story, and I felt a tingling sensation as when a theater curtain rises. The thing had begun when Walker Davis and his wife Audrey left Arkansas to settle in the newly opened public lands in the spring of 1889, and the end had come in the country of the Wichitas—north of the Washita River, in what is at present Caddo County. There is a small village called Binger there now, and the railway goes through; but otherwise the place is less changed than other parts of Oklahoma. It is still a section of farms and ranches — quite productive in these days—since the great oil-fields do not come very close.

Walker and Audrey had come from Franklin County in the Ozarks with a canvas-topped wagon, two mules, an ancient and useless dog called "Wolf," and all their household goods. They were typical hill-folk, youngish and perhaps a little more ambitious than most, and looked forward to a life of better returns for their hard work than they had had in Arkansas. Both were lean, rawboned specimens; the man tall, sandy and gray-eyed, and the woman short and rather dark, with a black straightness of hair suggesting a slight Indian admixture.

In general, there was very little of distinction about them, and but for one thing their annals might not have differed from those of thousands of other pioneers who flocked into the new country at that time. That thing was Walker's almost epileptic fear of snakes, which some laid to prenatal causes, and some said came from a dark prophecy about his end with which an old Indian squaw had tried to scare him when he was small. Whatever the cause, the effect was marked indeed; for despite his strong general courage the very mention of a snake would cause him to grow faint and pale, while the sight of even a tiny specimen would produce a shock sometimes bordering on a convulsion seizure.

The Davises started out early in the year, in the hope of being on their new land for the spring plowing. Travel was slow; for the roads were bad in Arkansas, while in the Territory there were great stretches of rolling hills and red, sandy barrens without any roads whatever. As the terrain grew flatter, the change from their native mountains depressed them more, perhaps, than they realized; but they found the people at the Indian agencies very affable, while most of the settled Indians seemed friendly and civil. Now and then they encountered a fellow-pioneer, with whom crude pleasantries and expressions of amiable rivalry were generally exchanged.

Owing to the season, there were not many snakes in evidence, so Walker did not suffer from his special temperamental weakness. In the earlier stages of the journey, too,

there were no Indian snake-legends to trouble him; for the transplanted tribes from the southeast do not share the wilder beliefs of their western neighbors. As fate would have it, it was a white man at Okmulgee in the Creek country who gave the Davises the first hint of the Yig beliefs; a hint which had a curiously fascinating effect on Walker, and caused him to ask questions very freely after that.

Before long Walker's fascination had developed into a bad case of fright. He took the most extraordinary precautions at each of the nightly camps, always clearing away whatever vegetation he found, and avoiding stony places whenever he could. Every clump of stunted bushes and every cleft in the great, slab-like rocks seemed to him now to hide malevolent serpents, while every human figure not obviously part of a settlement or emigrant train seemed to him a potential snake-god till nearness had proved the contrary. Fortunately no troublesome encounters came at this stage to shake his nerves still further.

As they approached the Kickapoo country they found it harder and harder to avoid camping near rocks. Finally it was no longer possible, and poor Walker was reduced to the puerile expedient of droning some of the rustic anti-snake charms he had learned in his boyhood. Two or three times a snake was really glimpsed, and these sights did not help the sufferer in his efforts to preserve composure.

ON THE twenty-second evening of the journey a savage wind made it imperative, for the sake of the mules, to camp in as sheltered a spot as possible; and Audrey persuaded her husband to take advantage of a cliff which rose uncommonly high above the dried bed of a former tributary of the Canadian River. He did not like the rocky cast of the place, but allowed himself to be overruled this once; leading the animals sullenly toward the protecting slope, which the nature of the ground would not allow the wagon to approach.

Audrey, examining the rocks near the wagon, meanwhile noticed a singular sniffing on the part of the feeble old dog. Seizing a rifle, she followed his lead, and presently thanked her stars that she had forestalled Walker in her discovery. For there, snugly nested in the gap between two boulders, was a sight it would have done him no good to see. Visible only as one convoluted expanse, but perhaps comprising as many as three or four separate units, was a mass of lazy wriggling which could not be other than a brood of new-born rattlesnakes.

Anxious to save Walker from a trying shock, Audrey did not hesitate to act, but took the gun firmly by the barrel and brought the butt down again and again upon the writhing objects. Her own sense of loathing was great, but it did not amount to a real fear. Finally she saw that her task was done, and turned to cleanse the improvised bludgeon in the red sand and dry, dead grass near by. She must, she reflected, cover the nest up before Walker got back from tethering the mules. Old Wolf, tottering relic of mixed shepherd and coyote ancestry that he was, had vanished, and she feared he had gone to fetch his master.

Footsteps at that instant proved her fear well founded. A second more, and Walker had seen everything. Audrey made a move to catch him if he should faint, but he did no more than sway. Then the look of pure fright on his bloodless face turned slowly to something like mingled awe and anger, and he began to upbraid his wife in trembling tones.

"Gawd's sake, Aud, but why'd ye go for to do that? Hain't ye heerd all the things they've ben tellin' about this snake-devil Yig? Ye'd ought to a told me, and we'd a moved on. Don't ye know they's a devil-god what gets even if ye hurts his children? What for d'ye think the Injuns all dances and beats their drums in the fall about? This land's under a curse, I tell ye—nigh every soul we've a-talked to sence we come in's said the same. Yig rules here, an' he comes out every fall for to git his victims and turn 'em into snakes. Why, Aud, they won't none of them Injuns acrost the Canayjin kill a snake for love nor money!

"Gawd knows what ye done to yourself, gal, a-stompin' out a hull brood o' Yig's chillen. He'll git ye, sure, sooner er later, unlessen I kin buy a charm offen some o' the Injun medicine-men. He'll git ye, Aud, as sure's they's a Gawd in heaven—he'll come outa the night and turn ye into a crawlin' spotted snake!"

All the rest of the journey Walker kept up the frightened reproofs and prophecies. They crossed the Canadian near Newcastle, and soon afterward met with the first of the real plains Indians they had seen—a party of blanketed Wichitas, whose leader talked freely under the spell of the whisky offered him, and taught poor Walker a long-winded protective charm against Yig in exchange for a quart bottle of the same inspiring fluid. By the end of the week the chosen site in the Wichita country was reached, and the Davises made haste to trace their boundaries and perform the spring plowing before even beginning the construction of a cabin.

The region was flat, drearily windy, and sparse of natural vegetation, but promised great fertility under cultivation. Occasional outcroppings of granite diversified a soil of decomposed red sandstone, and here and there a great flat rock would stretch along the surface of the ground like a man-made floor. There seemed to be very few snakes, or possible dens for them, so Audrey at last persuaded Walker to build the one-room cabin over a vast, smooth slab of exposed stone. With such a flooring and with a good-sized fireplace the wettest weather might be defied—though it soon became evident that dampness was no salient quality of the district. Logs were hauled in the wagon from the nearest belt of woods, many miles toward the Wichita Mountains.

Walker built his wide-chimneyed cabin and crude barn with the aid of some of the other settlers, though the nearest one was over a mile away. In turn, he helped his helpers at similar house-raisings, so that many ties of friendship sprang up between the new neighbors. There was no town worthy the name nearer than El Reno, on the railway thirty miles or more to the northeast; and before many weeks had passed, the people of the section had become very cohesive despite the wideness of their scattering. The Indians, a few of whom had begun to settle down on ranches, were for the most part harmless, though somewhat quarrelsome when fired by the liquid stimulation which found its way to them despite all government bans.

Of all the neighbors the Davises found Joe and Sally Compton, who likewise hailed from Arkansas, the most helpful and congenial. Sally is still alive, known now as Grandma Compton; and her son Clyde, then an infant in arms, has become one of the leading men of the state. Sally and Audrey used to visit each other often, for their cabins were only two miles apart; and in the long spring and summer afternoons they exchanged many a tale of old Arkansas and many a rumor about the new country.

Sally was very sympathetic about Walker's weakness regarding snakes,

but perhaps did more to aggravate than cure the parallel nervousness which Audrey was acquiring through his incessant praying and prophesying about the curse of Yig. She was uncommonly full of gruesome snake stories, and produced a direfully strong impression with her acknowledged masterpiece—the tale of a man in Scott County who had been bitten by a whole horde of rattlers at once, and had swelled so monstrously from poison that his body had finally burst with a pop. Needless to say, Audrey did not repeat this anecdote to her husband, and she implored the Comptons to beware of starting it on the rounds of the countryside. It is to Joe's and Sally's credit that they heeded this plea with the utmost fidelity.

Walker did his corn-planting early, and in midsummer improved his time by harvesting a fair crop of the native grass of the region. With the help of Joe Compton he dug a well which gave a moderate supply of very good water, though he planned to sink an artesian later on. He did not run into many serious snake scares, and made his land as inhospitable as possible for wriggling visitors. Every now and then he rode over to the cluster of thatched conical huts which formed the main village of the Wichitas, and talked long with the old men and shamans about the snake-god and how to nullify his wrath. Charms were always ready in exchange for whisky, but much of the information he got was far from reassuring.

Yig was a great god. He was bad medicine. He did not forget things. In the autumn his children were hungry and wild, and Yig was hungry and wild, too. All the tribes made medicine against Yig when the corn harvest came. They gave him some corn, and danced in proper regalia to the sound of whistle, rattle, and drum. They kept the drums pounding to drive Yig away, and called down the aid of Tiráwa, whose children men are, even as the snakes are Yig's children. It was bad that the squaw of Davis killed the children of Yig. Let Davis say the charms many times when the corn harvest comes. Yig is Yig. Yig is a great god.

By the time the corn harvest did come, Walker had succeeded in getting his wife into a deplorably jumpy state. His prayers and borrowed incantations came to be a nuisance; and when the autumn rites of the Indians began, there was always a distant wind-borne pounding of tom-toms to lend an added background of the sinister. It was maddening to have the muffled clatter always stealing over the wide red plains. Why would it never stop? Day and night, week on week, it was always going in exhaustless relays, as persistently as the red dusty winds that carried it. Audrey loathed it more than her husband did, for he saw in it a compensating element of protection. It was with this sense of a mighty, intangible bulwark against evil that he got in his corn crop and prepared cabin and stable for the coming winter.

The autumn was abnormally warm, and except for their primitive cookery the Davises found scant use for the stone fireplace Walker had built with such care. Something in the unnaturalness of the hot dust-clouds preyed on the nerves of all the settlers, but most of all on Audrey's and Walker's. The notions of a hovering snake-curse and the weird, endless rhythm of the distant Indian drums formed a bad combination which any added element of the bizarre went far to render utterly unendurable.

Notwithstanding this strain, several festive gatherings were held at one or another of the cabins after the crops were reaped: keeping naively alive in modernity those curious rites of the

harvest-home which are as old as human agriculture itself. Lafayette Smith, who came from southern Missouri and had a cabin about three miles east of Walker's, was a very passable fiddler; and his tunes did much to make the celebrants forget the monotonous beating of the distant tom-toms. Then Hallowe'en drew near, and the settlers planned another frolic—this time, had they but known it, of a lineage older than even agriculture: the dread Witch-Sabbath of the primal pre-Aryans, kept alive through ages in the midnight blackness of secret woods, and still hinting at vague terrors under its latter-day mask of comedy and lightness. Hallowe'en was to fall on a Thursday, and the neighbors agreed to gather for their first revel at the Davis cabin.

It was on that thirty-first of October that the warm spell broke. The morning was gray and leaden, and by noon the incessant winds had changed from searingness to rawness. People shivered all the more because they were not prepared for the chill, and Walker Davis's old dog Wolf dragged himself wearily indoors to a place beside the hearth. But the distant drums still thumped on, nor were the white citizenry less inclined to pursue their chosen rites. As early as four in the afternoon the wagons began to arrive at Walker's cabin; and in the evening, after a memorable barbecue, Lafayette Smith's fiddle inspired a very fair-sized company to great feats of saltatory grotesqueness in the one good-sized but crowded room. The younger folk indulged in the amiable inanities proper to the season, and now and then old Wolf would howl with doleful and spine-tickling ominousness at some especially spectral strain from Lafayette's squeaky violin—a device he had never heard before. Mostly, though, this battered veteran slept through the merriment; for he was past the age of active interests and lived largely in his dreams. Tom and Jennie Rigby had brought their collie Zeke along, but the canines did not fraternize. Zeke seemed strangely uneasy over something, and nosed around curiously all the evening.

Audrey and Walker made a fine couple on the floor, and Grandma Compton still likes to recall her impression of their dancing that night. Their worries seemed forgotten for the nonce, and Walker was shaved and trimmed into a surprizing degree of spruceness. By ten o'clock all hands were healthily tired, and the guests began to depart family by family with many handshakings and bluff assurances of what a fine time everybody had had. Tom and Jennie thought Zeke's eery howls as he followed them to their wagon were marks of regret at having to go home; though Audrey said it must be the far-away tom-toms which annoyed him, for the distant thumping was surely ghastly enough after the merriment within.

The night was bitterly cold, and for the first time Walker put a great log in the fireplace and banked it with ashes to keep it smoldering till morning. Old Wolf dragged himself within the ruddy glow and lapsed into his customary coma. Audrey and Walker, too tired to think of charms or curses, tumbled into the rough pine bed and were asleep before the cheap alarm-clock on the mantle had ticked out three minutes. And from far away, the rhythmic pounding of those hellish tom-toms still pulsed on the chill night-wind.

DR. MCNEILL paused here and removed his glasses, as if a blurring of the objective world might make the reminiscent vision clearer.

"You'll soon appreciate," he said, "that I had a great deal of difficulty in piecing out all that happened after the guests left. There were times, though—at first—when I was able to make a try at it." After a moment of silence he went on with the tale.

Audrey had terrible dreams of Yig, who appeared to her in the guise of Satan as depicted in cheap engravings she had seen. It was, indeed, from an absolute ecstasy of nightmare that she started suddenly awake to find Walker already conscious and sitting up in bed. He seemed to be listening intently to something, and silenced her with a whisper when she began to ask what had roused him.

"Hark, Aud!" he breathed. "Don't ye hear somethin' a-singin' and buzzin' and rustlin'? D'ye reckon it's the fall crickets?"

Certainly, there was distinctly audible within the cabin such a sound as he had described. Audrey tried to analyze it, and was impressed with some element at once horrible and familiar, which hovered just outside the rim of her memory. And beyond it all, waking a hideous thought, the monotonous beating of the distant tom-toms came incessantly across the black plains on which a cloudy half-moon had set.

"Walker—s'pose it's—the—the—curse o' Yig?"

She could feel him tremble.

"No, gal, I don't reckon he comes thataway. He's shapen like a man, except ye look at him clost. That's what Chief Gray Eagle says. This here's some varmints come in outen the cold—not crickets, I calc'late, but summat like 'em. I'd orter git up and' stomp 'em out afore they make much headway or git at the cupboard."

He rose, felt for the lantern that hung within easy reach, and rattled the tin match-box nailed to the wall beside it. Audrey sat up in bed and watched the flare of the match grow into the steady glow of the lantern. Then, as their eyes began to take in the whole of the room, the crude rafters shook with the frenzy of their simultaneous shriek. For the flat, rocky floor, revealed in the new-born illumination, was one seething brown-speckled mass of wriggling rattlesnakes, slithering toward the fire, and even now turning their loathsome heads to menace the fright-blasted lantern-bearer.

It was only for an instant that Audrey saw the things. The reptiles were of every size, of uncountable numbers, and apparently of several varieties; and even as she looked, two or three of them reared their heads as if to strike at Walker. She did not faint—it was Walker's crash to the floor that extinguished the lantern and plunged her into blackness. He had not screamed a second time—fright had paralyzed him, and he fell as if shot by a silent arrow from no mortal's bow. To Audrey the entire world seemed to whirl about fantastically, mingling with the nightmare from which she had started.

Voluntary motion of any sort was impossible, for will and the sense of reality had left her. She fell back inertly on her pillow, hoping that she would wake soon. No actual sense of what had happened penetrated her mind for some time. Then, little by little, the suspicion that she was really awake began to dawn on her; and she was convulsed with a mounting blend of panic and grief which made her long to shriek out despite the inhibiting spell which kept her mute.

Walker was gone, and she had not been able to help him. He had died of snakes, just as the old witch-woman had predicted when he was a little boy. Poor Wolf had not been able to help, either — probably he had not even awaked from his senile stupor. And now the crawling things must be coming for her, writhing closer and closer every moment in the dark, perhaps even now twining slipperily about the bed-posts and oozing up over the coarse woolen blankets. Unconsciously she crept under the clothes and trembled.

It must be the curse of Yig. He had sent his monstrous children on All-Hallows' Night, and they had taken Walker first. Why was that—

wasn't he innocent enough? Why not come straight for her—hadn't she killed those little rattlers alone? Then she thought of the curse's form as told by the Indians. She wouldn't be killed—just turned to a spotted snake. Ugh! So she would be like those things she had glimpsed on the floor—those things which Yig had sent to get her and enroll her among their number! She tried to mumble a charm that Walker had taught her, but found she could not utter a single sound.

The noisy ticking of the alarm-clock sounded above the maddening beat of the distant tom-toms. The snakes were taking a long time—did they mean to delay on purpose to play on her nerves? Every now and then she thought she felt a stealthy, insidious pressure on the bedclothes, but each time it turned out to be only the automatic twitchings of her overwrought nerves. The clock ticked on in the dark, and a change came slowly over her thoughts.

Those snakes *couldn't* have taken so long! They couldn't be Yig's messengers after all, but just natural rattlers that were nested below the rock and had been drawn there by the fire. They weren't coming for her, perhaps—perhaps they had sated themselves on poor Walker. Where were they now? Gone? Coiled by the fire? Still crawling over the prone corpse of their victim? The clock ticked, and the distant drums throbbed on.

At the thought of her husband's body lying there in the pitch blackness a thrill of purely physical horror passed over Audrey. That story of Sally Compton's about the man back in Scott County! He, too, had been bitten by a whole bunch of rattlesnakes, and what had happened to him? The poison had rotted the flesh and swelled the whole corpse, and in the end the bloated thing had *burst* horribly—burst horribly with a detestable *popping* noise. Was that what was happening to Walker down there on the rock floor? Instinctively she felt that she had begun to *listen* for something too terrible even to name to herself.

The clock ticked on, keeping a kind of mocking, sardonic time with the far-off drumming that the night-wind brought. She wished it were a striking clock, so that she could know how long this eldritch vigil must last. She cursed the toughness of fiber that kept her from fainting, and wondered what sort of relief the dawn could bring, after all. Probably neighbors would pass—no doubt somebody would call—would they find her still sane? Was she still sane now?

Morbidly listening, Audrey all at once became aware of something which she had to verify with every effort of her will before she could believe it; and which, once verified, she did not know whether to welcome or dread. *The distant beating of the Indian tom-toms had ceased.* They had always maddened her—but had not Walker regarded them as a bulwark against nameless evil from outside the universe? What were some of those things he had repeated to her in whispers after talking with Gray Eagle and the Wichita medicine-men?

She did not relish this new and sudden silence, after all! There was something sinister about it. The loud-ticking clock seemed abnormal in its new loneliness. Capable at last of conscious motion, she shook the covers from her face and looked into the darkness toward the window. It must have cleared after the moon set, for she saw the square aperture distinctly against the background of stars.

Then without warning came that shocking, unutterable sound—ugh!—that dull, putrid *pop* of cleft skin and escaping poison in the dark. God!—Sally's story—that obscene stench, and this gnawing, clawing silence! It was too much. The bonds of mute-

ness snapped, and the black night waxed reverberant with Audrey's screams of stark unbridled frenzy.

Consciousness did not pass away with the shock. How merciful if only it had! Amidst the echoes of her shrieking Audrey still saw the star-sprinkled square of window ahead, and heard the doom-boding ticking of that frightful clock. Did she hear another sound? Was that square window still a perfect square? She was in no condition to weigh the evidence of her senses or distinguish between fact and hallucination.

No—that window was *not* a perfect square. *Something had encroached on the lower edge.* Nor was the ticking of the clock the only sound in the room. There was, beyond dispute, a heavy breathing neither her own nor poor Wolf's. Wolf slept very silently, and his wakeful wheezing was unmistakable. Then Audrey saw against the stars the black, demoniac silhouette of something anthropoid — the undulant bulk of a gigantic head and shoulders fumbling slowly toward her.

"Y'aaaah! Y'aaaah! Go away! Go away! Go away, snake devil! Go 'way, Yig! I didn't want to kill 'em—I was feared he'd be scairt of 'em. Don't, Yig, don't! I didn't go for to hurt yore chillen — don't come nigh me—don't change me into no spotted snake!"

But the half-formless head and shoulders only lurched onward toward the bed, very silently.

Everything snapped at once inside Audrey's head, and in a second she had turned from a cowering child to a raging madwoman. She knew where the ax was—hung against the wall on those pegs near the lantern. It was within easy reach, and she could find it in the dark. Before she was conscious of anything further it was in her hands, and she was creeping toward the foot of the bed—toward the monstrous head and shoulders that every moment groped their way nearer. Had there been any light, the look on her face would not have been pleasant to see.

"Take *that*, you! And *that*, and *that*, and *that!*"

She was laughing shrilly now, and her cackles mounted higher as she saw that the starlight beyond the window was yielding to the dim prophetic pallor of coming dawn.

DR. MCNEILL wiped the perspiration from his forehead and put on his glasses again. I waited for him to resume, and as he kept silent I spoke softly.

"She lived? She was found? Was it ever explained?"

The doctor cleared his throat.

"Yes—she lived, in a way. And it was explained. I told you there was no bewitchment—only cruel, pitiful, material horror."

It was Sally Compton who had made the discovery. She had ridden over to the Davis cabin the next afternoon to talk over the party with Audrey, and had seen no smoke from the chimney. That was queer. It had turned very warm again, yet Audrey was usually cooking something at that hour. The mules were making hungry-sounding noises in the barn, and there was no sign of old Wolf sunning himself in the accustomed spot by the door.

Altogether, Sally did not like the look of the place, so was very timid and hesitant as she dismounted and knocked. She got no answer, but waited some time before trying the crude door of split logs. The lock, it appeared, was unfastened; and she slowly pushed her way in. Then, perceiving what was there, she reeled back, gasped, and clung to the jamb to preserve her balance.

A terrible odor had welled out as she opened the door, but that was not what had stunned her. It was what she had seen. For within that shadowy cabin monstrous things had happened and three shocking objects

remained on the floor to awe and baffle the beholder.

Near the burned-out fireplace was the great dog—purple decay on the skin left bare by mange and old age, and the whole carcass burst by the puffing effect of rattlesnake poison. It must have been bitten by a veritable legion of the reptiles.

To the right of the door was the ax-hacked remnant of what had been a man—clad in a nightshirt, and with the shattered bulk of a lantern clenched in one hand. *He was totally free from any sign of snake-bite.* Near him lay the ensanguined ax, carelessly discarded.

And wriggling flat on the floor was a loathsome, vacant-eyed thing that had been a woman, but was now only a mute, mad caricature. All that this thing could do was to hiss, and hiss, and hiss.

Both the doctor and I were brushing cold drops from our foreheads by this time. He poured something from a flask on his desk, took a nip, and handed another glass to me. I could only suggest tremulously and stupidly:

"So Walker had only fainted that first time—the screams roused him, and the ax did the rest?"

"Yes." Dr. McNeill's voice was low. "But he met his death from snakes just the same. It was his fear working in two ways—it made him faint, and it made him fill his wife with the wild stories that caused her to strike out when she thought she saw the snake-devil."

I thought for a moment.

"And Audrey—wasn't it queer how the curse of Yig seemed to work itself out on her? I suppose the impression of hissing snakes had been fairly ground into her."

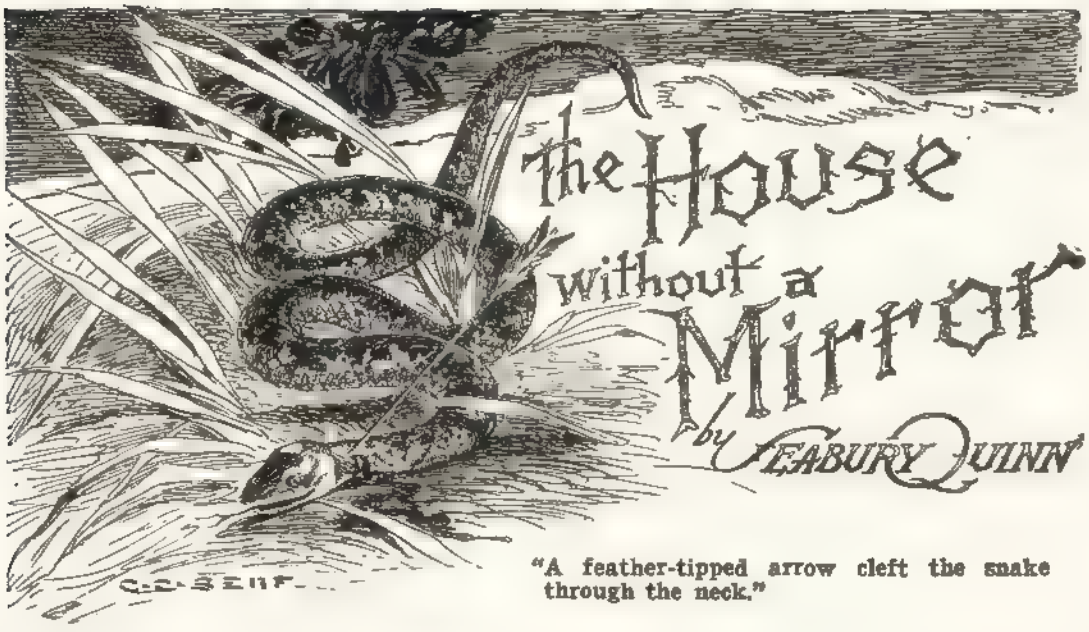
"Yes. There were lucid spells at first, but they got to be fewer and fewer. Her hair came white at the roots as it grew, and later began to fall out. The skin grew blotchy, and when she died——"

I interrupted with a start.

"*Died?* Then what was that—that thing downstairs?"

McNeill spoke gravely.

"*That* is what was born to her three-quarters of a year afterward. There were three more of them—two were even worse—but this is the only one that lived."



The House without a Mirror

by Seabury Quinn

"A feather-tipped arrow cleft the snake through the neck."

MY FRIEND Jules de Grandin was in one his gayest moods. Reclining against the plank seat of the john-boat he gazed with twinkling, bright blue eyes at the cloudless Carolina sky, tweaked the tips of his diminutive blond mustache till the waxed hairs thrust out to right and left of his small, thin-lipped mouth as sharply as a pair of twin fish-hooks, and gave vent to his own private translation of a currently popular song:

"Oui, nous n'avons plus de bananes;
Nous n'avons plus de bananes aujourd'hui!"

he caroled merrily.

"Say, looka yere, boss," protested our colored factotum from the boat's stern, "does yo' all want ter shoot enny o' dem birds, youh's best be cuttin' out dat music. Dese yere reed-birds is pow'ful skittish, wid so many no'then gemmen comin' dhown yere an' bangin' away all ober de place wid deir pump-guns, an——"

"*Là, là, mon brave,*" the little Frenchman interrupted, "of what importance is it whether we kill ten dozen or none at all of the small ones? Me, I had as soon return to Monsieur Gregory's lodge with empty bag as stagger homeward with a load of little feathered corpses. Have not these, God's little ones, a good right to live? Why should we slay them when our bellies are well filled with other things?"

The negro boy regarded him in hang-jawed amazement. That anyone, especially a "gemman" from the fabulous "no'th," should feel compunction at slaughtering the reed-birds swarming among the wild rice was something beyond his comprehension. With an inarticulate grunt he thrust his ten-foot pole into the black mud bottom of the swamp canal and drove the punt toward a low-lying island at the farther end of the lagoon-like opening in the waterway. "Does yo' all crave ter eat now?" he asked. "Ef yuh does, dis yere lan' is as dry as enny 'round yere, an——"

"But of course," de Grandin assented, reaching for the well-filled luncheon hamper our host had provided. "I am well-nigh perished with hunger, and if Monsieur Gregory has furnished brandy as well as

food—*mordieu,* may the hairs of his head each become a waxen taper to light his way to glory when he dies!"

The hamper was quickly unpacked and we sat cross-legged on a slight eminence to discuss assorted sandwiches, steaming coffee from vacuum bottles and some fine old cognac from a generously proportioned flask.

A faint rustling in the short grass at de Grandin's elbow drew my attention momentarily from my half-eaten sandwich. "Look out!" I cried sharply.

"Lawd Gawd, boss, don' move!" the colored boy added in a horrified tone.

Creeping unnoticed through the short, sun-dried vegetation with which the island was covered, a huge brown moccasin had approached within a foot of the little Frenchman and paused, head uplifted, yellow, forked tongue flickering lambently from venom-filled mouth.

We sat in frozen stillness. A move from the negro or me might easily have irritated the reptile into striking blindly; the slightest stirring by de Grandin would certainly have invited immediate disaster. I could hear the colored guide's breath rasping fearfully through his flaring nostrils; the pounding of my own heart sounded in my ears. I ran my tongue lightly over suddenly parched lips, noting, with that strange ability for minute inventory we develop at such times, that the membrane seemed rough as sandpaper.

Actually, I suppose, we held our statue-still pose less than a minute. To me it seemed a century. I felt the pupils of my eyes narrowing and ceasing to function as if I had just emerged from a darkened room into brilliant sunlight, and the hand which half raised the sandwich to my lips was growing heavy as a leaden fist when sudden diversion came.

Like a beam of light shot through a moonless night something whizzed through the still afternoon air from a thicket of scrub trees some thirty feet behind us; there was a sharp, clipping sound, almost like a pair of scissors snipping shut, and the deadly reptile's head struck the ground with a smacking impact. Next instant the foul creature's blotched body writhed upward, coiling and wriggling about a three-foot shaft of slender, flexible wood like the serpent round Mercury's caduceus. A feather-tipped arrow had cleft the snake through the neck an inch or less behind its ugly, wedged-shaped head, and pinned it to the earth.

"Thank you, friend," de Grandin cried, turning toward the direction from which the rescuing shaft had sped. "I know not who you are, but I am most greatly in your debt, for——"

He broke off, his lips refusing to frame another word, his small, round eyes staring unbelievingly at the visage which peered at us between the leaves.

The negro boy followed the Frenchman's glance, emitted a single shrill, terrified yell, turned a half somersault backward, regaining his feet with the agility of a cat and scurrying down the mud-flat where our boat lay beached. "Lawdy Gawdy," he moaned, "hit's de *ha'nt;* hit's de swamp ha'nt, sho's yuh bo'n! Lawd Gawd, lemme git erway fr'm heah! Please, suh, Gawd, sabe me, sabe dis pore nigger fr'm de ha'nt!"

He reached our punt, clambered aboard and shoved off, thrusting his pole against the lagoon bottom and driving the light craft across the water with a speed like that of a racing motorboat. Ere de Grandin or I could more than frame a furious shout he rounded the curve of a dense growth of wild rice and disappeared as completely as though dissolved into the atmosphere.

The Frenchman turned to me with a grimace. "*Cordieu,*" he remarked, "we would seem to be between the devil and the sea, Friend Trowbridge.

Did you, by any chance, see what I saw a moment hence?"

"Ye-es; I think so," I assented. "If you saw something so dreadful no nightmare ever equaled it——"

"*Zut!*" he laughed. "Let us not be ungrateful. Ugly the face is, I concede; but its owner did us at least one good turn." He pointed to the still-writhing snake, pinned fast to the earth by the sharp-tipped arrow. "Come, let us seek the ugly one. Though he be the devil's own twin for ugliness, he is no less deserving of our thanks. Perhaps he will show further amiability and point out an exit from this doubly damned morass of mud and serpents."

Treading cautiously, lest we step upon another snake, we advanced to the clump of scrub trees whence the repulsive face had peered. Several times de Grandin hailed the unseen monster whose arrow had saved his life, but no answer came from the softly rustling bushes. At length we pushed our way among the shrubs, and reached the covert where our unknown friend had been concealed. Nothing rewarded our search, though we passed entirely through the coppice several times.

I was about ready to drop upon the nearest rotting log for a moment's rest when de Grandin's shrill cry hailed me. "*Regardez-vous,*" he commanded, pointing to the black, greasy mud which sloped into the stagnant water.

Clearly outlined in the mire as though engraved with a sculptor's tool was the imprint of a tiny, moccasined foot, so small it could have been made only by a child or a daintily formed woman.

"Well——" I began, then paused for lack of further comment.

"Well, indeed, good friend," de Grandin assented with a vigorous nod. "Do not you understand its significance?"

"U'm—can't say I do," I confessed.

"*Ah bah,* you are stupid!" he shot back. "Consider: There is no sign of a boat having been beached here; there is nothing to which a boat could have been tied within ten feet of the water's edge. We have searched the island, we know we are alone here. What then? How came the possessor of this so lovely foot here, and *how did she leave?*"

"Hanged if I know," I returned.

"Agreed," he acquiesced, "but is it not fair to assume that she waded through yonder water to that strip of land? I think so. Let us test it."

We stepped into the foul marsh-water, felt the mud sucking at our boots, then realized that the bottom was firm enough to hold us. Tentatively, step by cautious step, we forded the forty-foot channel, finding it nowhere more than waist-deep, and, bedraggled, mud-caked and thoroughly uncomfortable, finally clambered up the loamy bank of the low peninsula which jutted into the marsh-lake opposite the island of our adventure.

"*Tiens,* it seems I was right, as usual, Friend Trowbridge," the Frenchman announced as we floundered up the bank to solid ground. Again, limned in the soft, moist earth, was a tiny, slender footprint, followed by others leading toward the rank-growing woods.

"I may be wrong," he admitted, surveying the trail, "but unless I am more mistaken than I think, we have but to follow our noses and these shapely tracks to extricate ourselves. Come; *allez vous en!*"

SIMPLE as the program sounded, it was difficult of accomplishment. The guiding footprints trailed off and lost themselves among the dead, crackling leaves with which the wood was paved, and the thick-set trees and thicker undergrowth disclosed nothing like a path. Beating the hampering bushes aside with our guns, staggering and crashing through thorny thickets by main strength and direct

assault, we forced our way, turning aside from time to time as the land became spongy with seeping bog-water or an arm of the green, stagnant swamp barred our advance. We progressed slowly, striving to attain open country before darkness overtook us, but before we realized it twilight fell and we were obliged to admit ourselves hopelessly lost.

"No use, old chap," I advised. "The more we struggle, the deeper in we get; with night coming on our chances of being mired in the swamp are a hundred to one. Best make camp and wait for daylight. We can build a fire and——"

"May Satan bake me in his oven if we do!" de Grandin interrupted. "Are we the Babes in the Woods that we should lie down here and wait for death and the kindly ministrations of the robin-redbreasts? Come away, my friend; we shall assuredly win through!"

He returned to the assault with redoubled vigor, beat his way some twenty yards farther through the underbrush, then gave a loud, joyous hail.

"See what is arrived, Friend Trowbridge!" he called. "*Cordieu,* did I not promise we should find it?"

Heavy-footed, staggering with fatigue, I dragged myself to where he stood, and stared in amazement at the barrier barring our path.

Ten feet away stood an ancient wall, gray with weather and lichen-spotted with age. Here and there patches of the stucco with which it had originally been dressed had peeled away, exposing the core of antique firebrick.

"Right or left?" de Grandin asked, drawing a coin from his pocket. "Heads we proceed right; tails, left." He spun the silver disk in the air and caught it between his palms. "*Bon,* we go right," he announced, shouldering his gun and turning on his heel to follow the wall.

A few minutes' walk brought us to a break in the barrier where four massive posts of roughly dressed stone stood sentry. There should have been gates between them, but only ancient hand-wrought hinges, almost eaten away with rust, remained. Graven in the nearest pillar was an escutcheon on which had been carved some sort of armorial device, but the moss of many decades had smothered the crest so that its form was indistinguishable.

Beyond the yawning gateway stood a tiny, box-like gatekeeper's lodge, like the wall, constructed of brick faced with stucco. Tiles had scuffed from its antiquated roof, the panes of old, green bottle-glass were smashed from its leaded casements; the massive door of age-discolored oak leaned outward drunkenly, its sole support a single lower hinge with joints long since solidified with rust.

Before us stretched the avenue, a mere unkept, overgrown trail straggling between two rows of honey-locusts. Alternating shafts of moonlight and shadow barred its course like stripes upon a convict's clothes. Nothing moved among the trees, not even a moth or a bird belated in its homeward flight. Despite myself, I shivered as I gazed on the desolation of this place of bygone splendor. It was as if the ghosts of ten generations of long-dead gentlefolk rose up and bade us stay our trespassing steps.

"*Eh bien,* it is not cheerful," de Grandin admitted with a somewhat rueful grin, "but there is the promise of four walls and at least the remnant of a roof beyond. Let us see what we shall see, Friend Trowbridge."

We passed between the empty gate-pillars and strode up the driveway, traversing perhaps a hundred yards before we saw the house—a low, age-ravaged building of rough gray stone set in the midst of a level, untended grass plot and circled by a fourteen-foot moat filled with green, stagnant water in which floated a few despondent-looking lily pads. The avenue continued to a crumbling causeway, broke abruptly at the moat's lip,

then took up its course to the grilled entrance of the house. Two tumble-down pillars reared astride the driveway at the farther side of the break, and swung between them, amazingly, was a mediæval drawbridge of stout oaken planks held up by strands of strong, almost new Manila hawser.

"*Grand diable,*" the Frenchman murmured wonderingly, "a *château fort*—here! How comes it?"

"I don't know," I responded, "but here it is, and it's in tolerable repair—what's more, someone lives in it. See, there's a light behind that window."

He looked, then nodded briefly. "My friend," he assured me, "I damnation think we shall eat and sleep within walls tonight.

"*Allo,*" he shouted through cupped hands, "*holà là-haut;* we hunger, we thirst, we are lost; we are miserable!"

Twice more he hailed the silent house before lights stirred behind the narrow windows piercing its walls. Finally the iron grille guarding the door swung slowly outward and an elderly, stoop-shouldered man shuffled out, an old-fashioned bull's-eye lantern dangling in his left hand, a modern and efficient-looking repeating rifle cradled in the crook of his right elbow.

"Who calls?" he asked, peering through the darkness and pausing to flash his smoky lantern in our direction. "Who is it?"

"*Mordieu,* two weary, wayworn travelers, no more," de Grandin answered. "All afternoon we have battled with this *sacré* woodland, and lost ourselves most thoroughly. We are tired, *Monsieur,* we are enervated, and the magnitude of our hunger is matched only by that of our thirst."

"Where are you from?" the other challenged, placing his lamp on the ground and surveying us suspiciously.

"From the hunting-lodge of Monsieur Wardman Gregory. In a fortuneless moment we accepted his invitation to come South and hunt the detestable little birds which frequent these morasses. This afternoon our seventy-times-damned traitor of a guide fled from us, leaving us to perish in a wilderness infested by snakes and devil-faced monsters of the woods. Surely, you will not deny us shelter?"

"If you're Gregory's guests it's all right," the other returned, "but if you come from *him*—you needn't look for mercy if I find it out."

"*Monsieur,*" de Grandin assured him, "half of what you say is intelligible, the other half is meaningless. The 'him' of whom you speak is a total stranger to us; but our hunger and fatigue is a real and present thing. Permit that we enter, if you please."

The master of the house eyed us suspiciously a second time; then he turned from his inspection and drew back the ratchet which held the hawser-drum. Creakingly, the drawbridge descended and bumped into place against its stone sill. "Come over," the old man called, taking up his gun and holding it in readiness, "but remember, the first false move you make means a bullet."

"*Parbleu,* he is churlish, this one," de Grandin whispered as we strode across the echoing planks.

Arrived beyond the moat, we assisted our unwilling host to rewind the ropes operating the bridge, and in compliance with a gesture containing more of suspicion than courtesy preceded him to the house.

THE building's gray, bare rooms were in keeping with its gray, dilapidated exterior; age and lack of care had more than softened the antique furnishings, it had reduced them to a dead level of tonelessness, without accent, making the big, stone-paved hall in which they stood seem empty and monotonous.

Our host put down his lantern and gun, then called abruptly: "Minerva—Poseidon—we have guests, prepare some food, make haste!"

Through a swinging door connecting with a rear apartment an ancient,

wrinkled little yellow woman sidled, paused at the threshold and looked about her uncertainly. "Did yuh say we all has *guests*, Marse Jawge?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes," replied her master, "they've been traveling all day, too. Shake up something to eat, quickly."

"Yas, suh," she returned and scuttled back to her kitchen like a frightened rabbit scurrying into its burrow.

She reappeared in a few minutes, followed by an aged and intensely black little man, each of them bearing a tray on which were slices of cold roast fowl, fresh white bread, preserved fruits, coffee and decanters of red, home-made wine. These they set on the massive table occupying the center of the room, and spread fresh napkins of coarse but carefully bleached linen, then stood waiting attentively.

A certain fumbling ineptness in their movements made me glance sharply at them a second time. Realization was slow in coming, but when it burst upon me I could hardly repress an exclamation. Both the aged servants were stone-blind; only the familiarity of long association enabled them to move about the room with the freedom of those possessing vision. I glanced hastily at de Grandin, and noted that his narrow, expressive face was alight with curiosity as he beheld the expressionless, sightless eyes of the servants.

Our host accompanied us to table and poured a cup of coffee and a glass of wine for himself as soon as we began our attack on the more substantial portions of the menu. He was a man well advanced in years, thin-faced, lean and sun-burned almost to the point of desiccation. Time had not dealt gently with him; his long, high-cheeked face, rendered longer by the drooping gray mustache and imperial he affected, seemed to have been beaten into angularity by merciless hammer-blows of unkind fortune. His lips were thin, almost colorless and exceedingly bitter in expression; his deep-set, dark eyes glowed and smoldered with a light of perpetual anger mingled with habitual distrust. He wore a suit of coarse linen crash, poorly tailored but spotlessly clean; his white-cotton shirt had seen better days, though not recently, for its wristbands were frayed and tattered at the edges, though it, too, was immaculate as though fresh from the laundress' hands.

Ravenous from his fast and the exhausting exercise of the afternoon de Grandin did voracious justice to the meal, but though his mouth was too full for articulate speech, his little, round blue eyes looked eloquent curiosity as they roved round the big, stone-floored hall, rested on the ancient, moldering tapestries and the dull Flemish oak furniture, and finally took minute inventory of our host.

The other noted the little Frenchman's wondering eyes and smiled with a sort of mournful pride. "The house dates from Jean Ribault's unfortunate attempt to colonize the coast," he informed us. "Georges Ducharme, an ancestor of mine, accompanied one of the unsuccessful expeditions to the New World, and when the colonists rose against their leaders at Port Royal, he and a few companions beat a path through the wilderness and finally settled here. This place was old when the foundations of Jamestown were laid. For almost four hundred years the Ducharmes have lived here, serving neither French king nor English, Federal Government nor Confederate States — they are and have always been a law unto themselves, accountable to none but their own consciences and God, sirs."

"U'm?" de Grandin cleared his mouth of roast pheasant and bread with a prodigious swallow, then helped himself to a generous stoup of home-made wine. "And you are the last of the Ducharmes, *Monsieur?*"

Quick suspicion was reborn in the other's dark, deep-set eyes as he regarded the Frenchman. For a moment he paused as a man may pause for breath before diving into a chilling stream; then, "Yes," he answered shortly. "I am the last of an ancient line. With me the house of Ducharme ceases to exist."

De Grandin tweaked the waxed ends of his tiny blond mustache after the manner of a well-fed tom-cat combing his whiskers. "Tell me, Monsieur Ducharme," he demanded as he chose a cigarette from his case with deliberate care and set it alight in the flame of one of the tall candles flickering on the table, "you have, presumably, passed the better part of your life here; of a certainty you are familiar with the neighborhood and its traditions. Have you, by any fortunate chance, heard of a certain monstrosity, a thing of infinite hideousness of appearance, which traverses the trackless wastes of these swamps? Today at noon I was all but exterminated by a venomous serpent, but a timely arrow—*an arrow*, mind you—shot from a near-by thicket, saved my life. Immediately I would have given thanks to the unknown archer who delivered me from the reptile, but when I turned to make acknowledgment, I beheld a face so vilely ugly, so exceedingly hideous, that it startled me to silence. *Eh bien*, it did more than that to our superstitious negro guide. He shrieked something about a specter which haunts the swampland and fled incontinently, leaving us to face the wilderness alone — may seven foul fiends torment his spirit unceasingly in the world to come!

"Thereafter we did search for some trace of the ill-favored one, but nothing could we find save only a few footprints—*parbleu*, such footprints as a princess might have boasted to possess!" He bunched his slender fingers at his lips and wafted an ecstatic kiss toward the vaulted stone ceiling.

Ducharme made a queer, choking noise in his throat. "You—you found footprints? You — traced — them — here?" he asked in an odd, dry voice, rising and gripping his chair till the tendons showed in lines of high, white relief against the backs of his straining hands.

"By no means," de Grandin answered. "Though we did struggle like flies upon the *papier des mouches* to extricate ourselves from this detestable morass, we found neither sign nor trace of human thing until we were stopped by the wall which girdles your estate, for which last the good God be devoutly thanked!"

Ducharme bent a long, questioning look on the little Frenchman, then shrugged his shoulders. "No matter," he murmured as though speaking to himself; "if you're *his* messengers I'll know it soon enough, and I'll know how to deal with you."

Aloud he announced: "You are probably tired after the day's exertions. If you've quite finished your repast, we may as well retire — we sleep early at Ducharme Hall."

Beside the newel-post of the wide, broad-stepped staircase curving upward from the hall stood a small oaken table bearing several home-dipped candles in standards of antique silver. Taking one of these, our host lit it from the candelabrum on the dining-table, handed it to me, then repeated the process and supplied de Grandin with a taper. "I'll show you to your room," he offered with a courteous bow.

We trooped up the stairs, turned down a narrow, stone-paved corridor and, at Ducharme's invitation, entered a high-ceiled, stone-floored chamber lighted by a single narrow window with leaded panes of ancient greenish glass and furnished with a four-post canopied bed, a massive chest of deep-carven oak and two straight-backed cathedral chairs which would have brought their weight in gold at a Madison Avenue antique dealer's.

"I'll have Poseidon wait on you in the morning," our host promised. "In spite of his natural handicaps he makes an excellent valet." What seemed to me a cruel smile flickered across the thin, pale lips beneath his drooping mustache as he concluded the announcement, bowed politely and backed from the room, drawing the door soundlessly shut behind him.

For a moment I stood in the center of the little, narrow room, striving to make a survey of our surroundings by the light of our tallow dips; then, moved by a sudden impulse, I ran on tiptoe to the door, seized its ancient, hand-wrought handle and pulled with all my might. Firm as though nailed to its casing, it resisted my strongest effort. As I gave over the attempt to force the panels open and turned in panic to de Grandin I thought I heard the muted echo of a low, malicious chuckle in the darkened corridor outside.

"I say, de Grandin," I whispered, "do you realize we're caught here like flies in a spider-web?"

"Very probably," he replied, smothering a yawn. "What of it? If they slit our throats while we sleep we shall at least have the advantage of a few minutes' repose before bidding Saint Peter *bonjour*. Come, let us sleep."

But despite his assumed indifference I noticed that he placed one of the great carved chairs before the door in such manner that anyone entering the apartment would do so at imminent peril of barked shins, perhaps of a broken leg, and that he removed only his boots and jacket and lay down with his vicious little automatic pistol ready to his hand.

"TROWBRIDGE, *mon vieux*, awake, arise and behold!" de Grandin's sharp whisper cut through my morning sleep. The early October day was well advanced, for a patch of warm, golden sunlight lay in a prism-mottled field on the stone pavement of the room, little half-moons of opalescent coloring marking the curved lenses of the green bottle-glass of the casement through which the beams came. Gazing with fixed intensity at some object below, the little Frenchman stood at the half-opened window and motioned me to join him.

As I stepped across the chilled paving-blocks of the bedroom floor the high, sweet notes of the polonaise from *Mignon* floated up to us, the singer taking the quadruple trills with the easy grace of a swallow skimming over sunlit water, never faltering in the vocal calisthenics which give pause to many a professional musician. "Wha—who——" I stammered wonderingly as I reached his side. "I thought Ducharme said——"

"*S-s-st!*" He cut me off. "Remark her; *c'est belle, n'est-ce-pas?*"

Just beyond the drawbridge, full in the rich flood of early-morning sunlight, stood a girl, slim, straight and virginal as a hazel wand, her head thrown back, a perfect torrent of clear, wine-rich soprano melody issuing from her throat. Only the rippling cascade of her abundant, wavy auburn hair told her sex, for from feet to throat she was arrayed like a boy—small, sturdy woodsman's moccasins laced calf-high about her straight, slender legs, riding-breeches of brown corduroy belted about her slight waist by a wide girdle of soft, brown leather, an olive-drab flannel shirt of military pattern, rolled elbow-high at the sleeves and open at the collar encasing her spare torso. Her back was to us as she trilled her joyous aubade to the rising sun, and I noticed that a leather baldric was swung across her left shoulder, a quiver of arrows with unstrung bow thrust among them laced to the wide suede strap.

Hands as white and delicately formed as any I had ever seen fluttered graciously in rhythm to the music as she poured her very heart out in song; as she ended on a high, true note, she wove her fingers to-

gether in a very ecstasy of self-engendered emotion, stood in lovely tableau a moment, then set off toward the forest with a swinging, graceful stride which told of long days spent in walking beneath the open sky with limbs unhampered by traveling-skirts and feet unfettered by modish shoes.

"De Grandin," I exclaimed, "can it be—is it possible—those little, moccasined feet, those arrows—can *she* be the archer who killed the snake yester——"

"You do forget the face we saw," he interrupted in a bleak, monotonous voice.

"But couldn't she—isn't it possible she wore a dreadful mask for some reason——"

"One wonders," he returned before I could complete my argument. "One also wonders who she is and what she does here."

"Yes, Ducharme distinctly told us he was the only one——"

"*Ah bah,*" he cut in. "That Monsieur Ducharme, I think he flatters himself he fools us, Friend Trowbridge. Meanwhile — *allo?* Who calls?"

A soft, timid knock sounded on our door, followed by a second rap, then, after a discreet interval, a third.

"Hit's Poseidon, suh," the old negro's voice answered quaveringly. "Marse Jawge, he done tol' me ter come up yere an' valet y'all dis mo'nin'. Is yuh ready fo' yo' baffs an' shaves, suhs? Ah done got de watah yere fo' yuh."

"By all means, enter, my excellent one," de Grandin replied, crossing to the door and flinging it back. With a start I noticed that it swung inward without resistance.

The old blind servant shuffled into the room, a towel and two old-fashioned razors in one hand, a porcelain basin clutched beneath his elbow and a pewter pitcher of steaming water in the other hand. "Ah'll shave yuh first, den drag in de baff, if yuh please, suh," he announced, turning his sightless eyes toward the corridor where a long, tin bathtub rested in readiness.

"*Bien non, mon brave,*" de Grandin denied, "I shall shave myself, as I have done each day since my sixteenth year. Bring me the mirror, if you please."

"Mirruh, suh?" the servant queried. "Dey ain't no sech thing in de house, suh. Minervy an' me, we don' need nuffin like hit, an' Marse Jawge, he manage ter git erlong wid me ter shave him. Mis' Clarimonde, she ain't nebber seen 'er—oh, Lawdy, suh, please, *please,* suh, don' nebber tell Marse Jawge Ah said nuffin erbout——"

"*Tiens,* my friend," the Frenchman reassured, "fear nothing. The best of us sometimes make slips of the tongue. Your lapse from duty shall be safe in my keeping. Meanwhile, however excellently you may barber your master, I fear I must dispense with your services. Trowbridge, my friend, lend me your glasses, if you please."

"My glasses?" I repeated, in surprize. "What——"

"But certainly. Must one draw diagrams before you understand? Is Jules de Grandin a fool, or has he sense? Observe." Taking my spectacles from the carved chest, he fixed them to the back of one of the tall chairs, draping his jacket behind the lenses to make a dark background. Thus equipped he proceeded to regard his image in the primitive mirror while he spread the lather thickly over cheeks and chin, then scraped it off with the exquisitely sharp blade of the perfectly balanced English razor the blind servant handed him.

"*Très bon,*" he announced with a satisfied smile. "Behold, I am my own valet this morning, nor has my complexion suffered so much as one little scratch. This old one here, he seems too innocent to practise any wrong on us, but—he who goes to dinner with the devil should take with

him a long spoon. Me, I do not care to take unnecessary chances."

Following de Grandin's example, I shaved myself with the aid of my glasses-mirror, and one after the other we laved ourselves in the tubs of lukewarm water the ancient servitor dragged in from the hall.

"If y'all is ready, suhs," the negro announced as we completed our toilets, "Ah'll 'scort yuh to de dinin'-room. Marse Jawge is waitin' yo' pleasure below."

"Ah, good morning, gentlemen," Ducharme greeted as we joined him in the main hall. I trust you enjoyed a good night's rest?"

The Frenchman eyed him critically. "I have had worse," he replied. "However, the sense of security obtained by well-bolted doors is not greatly heightened by knowledge that the locks operate from the further side, *Monsieur.*"

A faint flush mounted our host's thin cheeks at de Grandin's thrust, but he chose to ignore it. "Minerva!" he cried sharply, turning toward the kitchen. "The gentlemen are down; bring in some breakfast."

The old, blind negress emerged from her quarters with the promptness of a cuckoo coming from its cell as the clock strikes the hour, and placed great bowls of steaming cornmeal mush before us. Idly, I noticed that the pitcher for the milk accompanying the mush was of unglazed pottery and the pot in which the steaming coffee was served was of tarnished, dull-finished silver.

With a rather impatient gesture, Ducharme motioned us to eat and excused himself from joining us by saying he had breakfasted an hour or so before.

De Grandin's little eyes scarcely left our host's face as he ate ravenously, but though he seemed on the point of putting some question point-blank more than once, he evidently thought better of it, and held his peace.

"It's impossible for me to get a guide for you this morning, gentlemen," Ducharme apologized as we finished breakfast, "and it's hardly practicable for me to accompany you myself. However, if you'll be good enough to remain another day, I think—perhaps—I may be able to find someone to take you back to Gregory's. Provided, of course, you really wish to go there." Something like a sneer crossed his lips as he concluded, and de Grandin was on his feet instantly, his small face livid with rage.

"*Monsieur,*" he protested, his little eyes snapping ominously, "on more than one occasion you have been good enough to intimate we are impostors. I have heard much of your vaunted Southern hospitality in the past, but the sample you display leaves much to be desired. If you will be so good as to stand aside we shall give ourselves the pleasure of shaking your dust from our feet forthwith. Meantime, since you have small liking for the post of social host, permit that we compensate you for our entertainment." His face still white with fury, he thrust his hand into his pocket, withdrew a roll of bills and tossed several on the table. "I trust that is sufficient," he added cuttingly. "Count it; if you desire more, more shall be forthcoming."

Ducharme had risen with de Grandin. As the Frenchman finished his tirade, he stepped quickly to the corner and snatched up his rifle. "If either of you attempts to leave this house before I give permission," he announced in a low, menacing voice, "so help me God, I'll blow his head off!" With a quick backward step he reached the door, slipped through it and banged it shut behind him.

"Are you going to stand this?" I demanded angrily, turning to de Grandin. "The man's mad—mad as a hatter. We'll be murdered before sunset if we don't get away!"

"I think not so," he returned, re-

suming his seat and lighting a cigarette. "As for killing us, he will need more speed than he showed just now. I had him covered from my pocket before he took up his gun, and could have stopped his words with a bullet any time I was so minded, but—I did not care to. There are things which interest me about this place, Friend Trowbridge, and I desire to remain until my curiosity is satisfied."

"But his insinuations—his insulting doubt——" I began.

"*Tiens,* it *was* well done, was it not?" he interrupted with a self-satisfied smile. *Barbe d'un chameau,* I play-acted so well I did almost deceive myself!"

"Then you weren't really angry——"

"Jules de Grandin is quick to anger, my friend, if the provocation be sufficient, but never has he bitten off his nose through desire to revenge himself upon his face. No. Another time I might have resented his boorishness. This morning I desire to remain more greatly than I wish to leave; but should I disclose my real desires he would undoubtlessly insist upon our going. *Alors,* I make the monkey business. To make our welcome doubly sure, I deceive Monsieur Ducharme to think that leaving is our primary desire. *C'est très simple, n'est-ce-pas?*"

"I suppose so," I admitted, "but what earthly reason have you for wanting to stay in this confounded place?"

"One wonders," he returned enigmatically, blowing a twin cloud of smoke from his nostrils.

"One certainly does," I agreed angrily. "I, for one——"

He tossed his cigarette into his porringer and rose abruptly. "Is it of significance to you, my friend, that this *sacré* house contains not only not a single mirror, but not so much as one polished surface in which one may by any chance behold himself—with the exception of the spectacles which adorn your kindly nose this minute? Or that the servants here are blind?" he added as I shook my head doubtfully. "Or that Monsieur Ducharme has deliberately attempted to mislead us into thinking that he, we and the two blind ones are the only tenants of the place?"

"It is mystifying," I agreed, "but I can't seem to fit the facts into any kind of pattern. Probably they're just coincidences, and——"

"Coincidence is the name we give to that we can not otherwise explain," he interrupted. "Me, I have arrived already at a theory, though much still remains obscure. At dinner tonight I shall let fly a random shot; who knows what it may bring down?"

DUCHARME kept out of sight the remainder of the day, and it was not till well after dark we saw him again. We were just concluding our evening meal when he let himself in, a more amiable expression on his sour face than I had seen before.

"Dr. de Grandin, Dr. Trowbridge," he greeted as he placed his rifle in an angle of the wall and drew a chair up to the table, "I have to tender you my humblest apologies. My life has been a bitter one, gentlemen, and I live in daily dread of something I can not explain. However, if I tell you it is sufficient to make me suspicious of every stranger who comes near the house, you may understand something of the lack of courtesy I have shown you. I did doubt your word, sirs, and I renew my apologies for doing so. This morning, after warning you to stay indoors, I went to Gregory's—it's less than a three hours' trip, if you know the way—and made certain of your identity. Tomorrow, if you wish, I shall be happy to guide you to your friends."

The Frenchman bent a long, speculative stare upon our host. At length: "You are satisfied from

Monsieur Gregory's report that we are indeed physicians?" he asked.

"Of course——"

"Suppose I add further information. Would it interest you to know that I hold degrees from Vienna and the Sorbonne, that I have done much surgical work for the University of Paris, and that in the days after the Armistice I was among those who helped restore to pre-war appearance the faces of those noble heroes whose features had been burned away by Hunnish *flammenwerfer*?" He pronounced the last words with slow, impressive deliberation, his level, unwinking gaze fixed firmly on the dark, sullen eyes of our host.

Quick, incredulous fury flamed in the other's face. "You spying scoundrel—you damned sneak!" he cried, leaping from his chair and making for his rifle.

"Slowly!" De Grandin, too, was on his feet, his small, round eyes blazing with implacable purpose, his little, deadly pistol aimed unwaveringly at Ducharme's breast. "Greatly as I should regret it," he warned, "I shall kill you if you make one further move, *Monsieur*."

The other wavered, for there was no doubting de Grandin's sincerity.

"Ah, that is better," he remarked as Ducharme halted, then returned slowly to his seat. "Now we shall talk sense.

"A moment since, *Monsieur*," he continued as Ducharme dropped heavily into his chair and sank his face in his hands, "I did avail myself of what the Americans call the bluff. Consider, I am clever; the wool can not successfully be drawn across my eyes, and so I suspected what I now know for the truth. Yesterday an arrow saved my life; anon we found small footprints in the the mud; last night when we arrived here we met with scant welcome from you, and inside the house we found you waited on by blinded servants. This morning, when I ask for a mirror that I may shave myself, your servant tells there is not one in all the house, and on sober thought I recall that I have seen no single polished surface wherein a man may behold his own image. Why is it? If strangers are unwelcome, if there be no mirrors here, if the servants be blind—is there not something hideous within these walls, something of which you know, but which you desire to be kept most secret? Again, you are not beautiful, but you would not necessarily be averse to regarding your reflection in a mirror. What then? Is it not, perhaps, I think, that you greatly desire that the ugly one—whoever it be—shall not only not be seen, but shall not see itself? It are highly probable.

"This morning I have seen a so lovely young girl, attired for *le footing*, who sings divinely in the early sunlight. But I have not seen her face. No. However, she wears upon her back a bow and quiverful of arrows—and an arrow such as those saved me from the serpent yesterday, one little moment before we beheld the face of awful ugliness.

"Two and two invariably make four, *Monsieur*. You have said there is no other person but yourself and your servants in the house; but even as you doubted me, so I have doubted you. Indeed, from what I have seen, I know you have been untruthful; but I think you are so because of some great reason. And so I tell you of my work in restoring the wrecked faces of the soldiers of France.

"But I am no idle boaster. No. What I say is true. Call in the unfortunate young lady; I shall examine her minutely, and if it are humanly possible I shall remold her features to comeliness. If you do not consent you are a heartless, inhuman monster. Besides," he added matter-of-factly, "if you refuse I shall kill you and perform the operation anyway."

Ducharme gazed unbelievingly at him. "You really think you can do it?" he demanded.

"Have I not said it?"

"But, if you fail——"

"Jules de Grandin does not fail, *Monsieur.*"

"Minerva!" Ducharme called. "Ask Miss Clarimonde to come here at once, please."

The old blind woman's slipshod footsteps sounded along the tiled floor of a back passage for a moment, then faded away as she slowly climbed a hidden flight of stairs.

For something like five minutes we sat silently. Once or twice Ducharme swallowed nervously, de Grandin's slim, white fingers drummed a noiseless devil's tattoo on the table, I fidgeted nervously in my chair, removed my glasses and polished them, returned them to my nose, then snatched them off and fell to wiping them again. At length the light tap-tap of slippered feet sounded on the stairs and we rose together as a tall, graceful figure emerged from the stairway shadow into the aura of light thrown out by the candles.

"My daughter, gentlemen—Clarimonde, Dr. de Grandin; Dr. Trowbridge," Mr. Ducharme introduced in a voice gone thin and treble with nervousness. From the corner of my eye I could see him watching us in a sort of agony, awaiting the horror we were bound to show as the girl's face became visible.

I saw de Grandin's narrow, pointed chin jut forward as he set his jaw against the shock of the hideous countenance, then watched the indomitable will within him force his face into the semblance of an urbane smile as he stepped forward gallantly and raised the girl's slim, white hand to his lips.

The figure which stepped slowly, reluctantly, into the dull luminence of the candles was the oddest patchwork of grotesquerie I had ever seen. From feet to throat she was perfectly made as a sculptured Hebe, slim, straight, supple with the pliancy of youth and abundant health. Shoes of white satin and stockings of sheerest white silk complemented a straight, plain frock of oyster-white which assuredly had come from nowhere but Vienna or the Rue de la Paix; a Manila shawl, yellowed with years and heavily fringed, lay scarfwise over her ivory shoulders and arms; about her throat was clasped a single tight-fitting strand of large, lustrous pearls.

The sea-gems were the line of demarcation. It was as if by some sorcery of obscene surgery the lovely girl's head had been sheared off by a guillotine three inches above the clavicle and replaced by the foulest specimen from the stored-up monstrosities of a medical museum. The skin about the throat was craped and wrinkled like a toad's, and of the color of a tan boot on which black dressing has inadvertently been rubbed, then ineffectually removed. Above, the chin was firm and pointed, tapering downward from the ears in good lines, but the mouth extended a full five inches across the face, sweeping in a curving diagonal from left to right like a musical turn mark, one corner lifted in a perpetual travesty of a grin, the other sagging in a constant snarl. Between the spaces where the brows should have been the glabella was so enlarged that a protuberance almost like a horn stood out from the forehead, while the eyes, fine hazel, flecked with brown, were horrifically cocked at divergent angles so that it was impossible for her to gaze at an object directly before here without turning her head slightly to the side. The nose was long and curved, exaggeratedly high-bridged and slit down the outer side of each flaring nostril as the mouth of a hairlipped person is cleft. Like the throat, the entire

face was integumented in coarse, loosely wrinkled skin of soiled brown, and, to make the contrast more shockingly incongruous, a mass of gleaming auburn hair, fine and scintillant as spun rose-gold, lay loosely coiled in a Grecian coronal above the repulsive countenance.

Had the loathsomeness been unrelieved by contrasting comeliness, the effect would have been less shocking; as it was, the hideous face inlaid between the perfect body and glowing, ruddy diadem of hair was like the sacrilegious mutilation of a sacred picture—as though the oval of the Sistine Virgin's face were cut from the canvas and the sardonic, grinning features of a punchinello thrust through the aperture.

To his everlasting credit, de Grandin did not flinch. Debonair as though at any social gathering, he bowed the monstrous creature to a chair and launched a continuous flow of conversation. All the while I could see his eyes returning again and again to the hideous countenance across the table, his keen surgeon's-mind surveying the grotesque features and weighing his chances of success against the almost foregone certainty of failure.

THE ordeal lasted something like half an hour, and my nerves had stretched to the snapping point when sudden diversion came.

With a wild, frantic movement the girl leaped up, oversetting her chair, and faced us, her misdirected eyes rolling with a horrible ludicrousness in their sockets, tears of shame and self-pity welling from them and coursing down the sides of her grotesque face. Her wide, cavernous mouth opened obliquely and she gave scream after scream of shrill, tortured anguish. "I know; I know!" she cried frenziedly. "Don't think you've fooled me by taking all the mirrors from the house, Father! Remember, I go about the woods at will, and *there are pools of quiet water in the woods!* I know I'm hideous; I know I'm so repulsive that even the servants who wait on us must be blind! I've seen my face reflected in the moat and the swamp; I saw the horror in your eyes when you first looked at me, Dr. de Grandin; I noticed how Dr. Trowbridge couldn't bear even to glance at me just now without a shudder! Oh, God of mercy, why haven't I had courage to kill myself before?—Why did I live till I met strangers and saw them turn from me with loathing? Why——"

"*Mademoiselle,* be still!" de Grandin's sharp, incisive command cut through her hysterical words and stung her to silence. "You lament unnecessarily," he continued as she turned her goggling toad-eyes toward him. "*Monsieur,* your father, bids you come to us for a specific purpose; namely, that I inspect your countenance and give him my opinion as a surgeon concerning the possibility of cure. Attend me: I tell you I can so reshape your features that you shall be completely beautiful; you shall grace the salons of Washington, of New York, of Paris, and you shall have young men to do you honor and lay their kisses thick upon your hands and lips, and breathe their tales of love into your ears; you——"

A shriek of wild, incredulous laughter silenced him. "I? I have admirers—lovers? Dear God — the bitterness of the mockery! I am doomed to spend my life among the snakes and toads, the bats and salamanders of the swamps, a thing as hideous as the ugliest of them, cut off from all my kind, and——"

"Your fate may be a worse one, unless I can prevent it," Ducharme broke in with an odd, dry croaking voice.

We turned on him by common consent as he rasped his direful prophecy. His long, goat-like face was

working spasmodically; I could see the tendons of his thin neck contracting as he swallowed nervously, and the sad, bitter lips beneath the drooping gray mustache twisted into a smile that was more than half a snarl as he gazed at de Grandin and his daughter in turn.

"You wondered why I greeted you with suspicion when you came asking food and shelter last night, gentlemen?" he asserted rather than asked, looking from the Frenchman to me. "This is why:

"As I told you last night, the Ducharmes have lived here since long before the first English colony was planted in Virginia. Although our plantation has been all but eaten up by the swamps, the family wealth holds out, and I am what is counted a rich man, even in these days of swollen fortunes. It was the custom of our family for generations to send their women to a convent at Rheims for education; the young men were sent to Oxford or Cambridge, Paris or Vienna, occasionally to Louvain or Heidelberg, and their training was completed by the grand tour.

"I followed the family tradition and studied at the Sorbonne when my undergraduate work at Oxford was completed. It was while I lived in Paris I met Inocencia. She was an *Argentina*—a native of the Argentine, a dancer in a cabaret, and as lovely a creature as ever set a man's blood afire. All the students were mad about her, but Ruiz, a fellow-countryman of hers, and I were the most favored of her coterie of suitors.

"Leandro Ruiz was a medical student, the son of an enormously wealthy cattleman, who took to surgery from an innate love of blood and suffering rather than from any wish to serve humanity or earn a livelihood, for he already had more money than he could ever spend, and as for humanitarianism, the devil himself had more of it.

"One night as I sat studying, there came a terrified rapping at my door, and Inocencia fell, rather than ran, into my rooms. She had struggled through the raging sleet-storm from Montmartre, and Ruiz was hot behind her. He had accosted her as she left the café, and demanded that she come forthwith and consort with him—there never was an honorable thought in the scoundrel's mind, and what he could not buy he was accustomed to take by force.

"I had barely time to lock and bar the door when Ruiz and three hired bullies came clamoring up the stairs and battered on the panels like werewolves shut out from their prey. Ha, I left my mark on him that night! As he stooped down to bawl obscenities through the keyhole I thrust a sword-cane through the lock and blinded him in one eye. Despite his wound he hung around the door nearly all night, and it was not till two gendarmes threatened him and his companions with arrest for public disturbance that they slunk away.

"Next morning Inocencia and I arranged to be married, and as soon as the formalities of French law could be complied with, we were wed and made a tour of Europe for our honeymoon. When we returned to Paris we heard Ruiz had contracted pneumonia the night he raged outside my quarters in the sleet, and had died and been buried in St. Sulpice. Ha, you may be sure we shed no tears at the news!

"I was nearly thirty, Inocencia barely twenty when we married. It was not till ten years later that Clarimonde was born, and when at last we had a child to crown our union we thought our cup of joy was surely overflowing. God!" He paused, poured himself a goblet of wine and drained it to the bottom before continuing:

"No hired *bonne* was good enough to take our darling out; Inocencia herself accompanied her on every

outing and filled the afternoons with recitals of the thousand cunning things our baby did and said while toddling in the park.

"One day they did not return. I was frantic and set the entire gendarmerie by the ears to search for them. Nowhere could we find a trace till finally my wife's dead body, partly decomposed, but still identifiable, was rescued from the Seine. Police investigation disclosed she had been murdered—her throat severed and her heart cut out, but not before a hundred and more disfiguring wounds had been inflicted with a knife.

"My baby's fate was still unknown, and I lived for weeks and months in a frenzy of mingled despair and hope till——" Again he paused; once more he filled and drained a wine-glass. Then: "At last my fears were set at rest. At daylight one morning the thin, pitiful wailing of a little frightened child sounded at my door, and when the *concierge* went to investigate she found Clarimonde lying there in a basket. Clarimonde, my Clarimonde, her mother's sole remaining souvenir, dressed in the baby garments she had worn the day she vanished, positively identified by the little, heart-shaped birthmark on the under side of her left arm, but, my God, how altered! Her face, gentlemen, was as you see it now, a dreadful, disfigured, mutilated mask of horror, warped and carved and twisted almost out of human semblance, save as the most grotesque caricature resembles the thing it parodies. And with her was a letter, a letter from Leandro Ruiz. The fiend had caused the report of his death to be given us, and bided his time through all the years, always studying and experimenting in plastic surgery that he might one day carry out his terrible revenge, watching Inocencia and Clarimonde when they least suspected it, familiarizing himself with their habits and ways so that he might best set his *apaches* on them and kidnap them when the time was ripe for his devil's vengeance. After dishonoring and torturing Inocencia, he killed her slowly—cut her heart from her living breast before he slashed her throat. The next three months he spent carefully disfiguring the features of our baby, adding horror on horror to the poor, helpless face as though he were a sculptor working out the details of a statue with slow, painstaking care. At last, when even he could think of nothing more to add to the devastation he had made, he laid the poor, mutilated mite on my doorstep with a note describing his acts, and containing the promise that all his life and all his boundless wealth would be devoted to making his revenge complete.

"You wonder how he could do more? Gentlemen, you can not think how vile humanity can be until you've known Leandro Ruiz. Listen: When Clarimonde reaches her twenty-first year, he said he would come for her. If death had taken him meanwhile, he would leave a sum of money to pay those who carried out his will. He, or his hirelings, would come for her, and though she hid behind locked doors and armed men, they would ravish her away, cut out her tongue to render her incapable of speech, *then exhibit her for hire in a freak show*—make my poor, disfigured baby girl the object of yokels' gawking curiosity throughout the towns and provinces of Europe and South America!

"I fled from Paris as Lot fled from Sodom, and brought my poor, maimed child to Ducharme Hall. Here I secured Minerva and Poseidon for servants, because both were blind and could not let fall any remarks which would make Clarimonde realize her deformity. I secured

blind teachers and tutors; she is as well educated as any seminary graduate; every luxury that money could buy has been given her, but never has there been a mirror in Ducharme Hall, or anything which could serve as a mirror, since we came here from Paris.

"Now, gentlemen, perhaps you understand the grounds for my suspicions? Clarimonde was twenty-one this month."

Jules de Grandin twisted the fine, blond hairs of his diminutive mustache until they stood out in twin needle-points each side of his mouth, and fixed a level, unwinking stare upon our host. "*Monsieur,*" he said, "a moment hence I was all for going to the North; I would have argued to the death against a moment's delay which kept me from performing the necessary work to restore Mademoiselle Clarimonde's features to their pristine loveliness. Now, *parbleu,* five men and ten little boys could not drag me from this spot. We shall wait here, *Monsieur,* we shall stay here, rooted as firmly as the tallest oak in yonder forest, until this Monsieur Ruiz and his corps of assassins appear. Then"—he twisted the ends of his mustache still more fiercely, and the lightning-flashes in his little, round eyes were cold as arctic ice and hot as volcanic fire—"then, by damn, I think those seventy-six-thousand-times accursed miscreants shall find that he who would step into the hornet's nest would be advised to wear heavy boots. Yes; I have said it."

From that night Ducharme Hall was more like a castle under siege than ever. In terror of abduction Clarimonde no longer roamed the woods, and Mr. Ducharme, de Grandin or I was always on lookout for any strangers who might appear inside the walled park. A week, ten days passed quietly, and we resumed our plans for returning North, where the deformed girl's face could receive expert surgical treatment.

"I shall give Mademoiselle Clarimonde my undivided attention until all is accomplished," de Grandin told me as we lay in bed one evening while the October wind soughed and moaned through the locust-trees bordering the avenue and a pack of tempest-driven storm clouds harried the moon like hounds pursuing a fleeing doe. "With your permission I shall leave your house and take up residence in the hospital, Friend Trowbridge, and neither day nor night shall I be beyond call of the patient. I shall—

"*Attendez, voilà les assassins!*" Faintly as the scuffing of a dried twig against the house, there came the gentle sound of something scratching against the rubble-stone of the wall.

For a moment the Frenchman lay rigid; then with bewildering quickness he leaped from the bed, bundled the sheets and pillows together in simulation of a person covered with bedclothes, and snatched down one of the heavy silken cords binding back the draperies which hung in mildewed festoons between the mahogany posts. "Silence!" he cautioned, tiptoeing across the chamber and taking his station beside the open casement. "No noise, my friend, but if it is possible, do you creep forward and peer out, then tell me what it is you see."

Cautiously, I followed his instructions, rested my chin upon the wide stone window-sill and cast a hurried glance down the wall.

Agilely as a cat, a man encased in close-fitting black jersey and tights was scaling the side of the house by aid of a hooked ladder similar to those firemen use. Behind him came a companion, similarly costumed and equipped, and even as I watched them I could not but marvel at the almost total silence in which they swarmed up the rough stones.

I whispered my discovery to de Grandin, and saw him nod once understandingly. "*Voleurs de nuit*—professional burglars," he pronounced. "He chose expert helpers, this one. Let us await them."

A moment later there was a soft, rubbing sound as a long steel hook, well wrapped in tire-tape, crept like a living thing across the window-sill, and was followed in a moment by a slender and none too clean set of fingers which reached exploringly through the casement.

In another instant a head covered by a tight-fitting black jersey cowl loomed over the sill, the masked eyes peered searchingly about the candle-lit room; then, apparently satisfied that someone occupied the bed and slept soundly, the intruder crept agilely across the sill, landed on the stone floor with a soft thud and cleared the space between bed and window in a single feline leap.

There was the glint of candlelight on sharpened steel and a fiendish-looking stiletto flashed downward in a murderous arc and buried itself to the hilt in the pillow which lay muffled in the blankets where I had lain two minutes before.

Like a terrier pouncing on a rat de Grandin leaped on the assassin's shoulders. While awaiting the intruder's advent he had looped the strong curtain cord into a running noose, and as he landed on the other's back, driving his face down among the bedding and effectively smothering outcry, he slipped the strangling string about the burglar's throat, drew it tight with a single dexterous jerk, then crossed its ends and pulled them as one might pull the draw-string of a sack. "Ha, good *Monsieur le Meurtrier*," he whispered exultantly, "I serve you a dish for which you have small belly, *n'est-ce-pas?* Eat your fill, my friend, do not stint yourself, Jules de Grandin has plentiful supply of such food for you!

"So!" He straightened quickly and whipped the cord from his captive's throat. "I damnation think you will give us small trouble for some time, my friend. Attention, Friend Trowbridge, the other comes!"

Once more he took his place beside the window, once more he cast his strangling cord as a masked head protruded into the room. In a moment two black-clad, unconscious forms lay side by side upon the bed.

"Haste, my friend, *dépêchez vous*," he ordered, beginning to disrobe our prisoners as he spoke. "I do dislike to ruin Monsieur Ducharme's bedding, but we must work with what we have. Tear strips from the sheets and bind these unregenerate sons of pigs fast. There is no time to lose; a moment hence and we must don their disguises and perform that which they set out to do."

We worked feverishly, tying the two desperadoes in strip after strip of linen ripped from the sheets, gagging them, blindfolding them; finally, as an added precaution, lashing their hands and feet to the head- and foot-posts of the bed. Then, shedding our pajamas, we struggled into the tight-fitting jerseys the prisoners had worn. The stocking-like garments were clammily wet and chilled me to the marrow as I drew them on, but the Frenchman gave me no time for complaint. "*Allons, en route,* make haste!" he ordered.

Leaving the unconscious thugs to such meditations as they might have upon regaining consciousness, we hastened to Ducharme's chamber.

"Fear not, it is I," de Grandin called as he beat imperatively on our host's door. "In our chamber repose two villains who gained entrance by means of scaling ladders—from the feel of their clothes, which we now wear, I should say they swam your moat. We go now to lower the drawbridge and let the master villain in. Do you be ready to receive him!"

"*Holà!*" he called a moment later as we let ourselves out the front door and lowered the drawbridge. "Come forth, all is prepared!"

Two men emerged from the darkness beyond the moat in answer to his hail, one a tall, stoop-shouldered fellow arrayed in ill-fitting and obviously new clothes, the other small, frail-looking, and enveloped from neck to high-heeled boots in a dark mackintosh or raincoat of some sort which hung about his spare figure like the cloak of a conspirator in a melodramatic opera. There was something infinitely wicked in the slouching truculent swagger of the big, stoop-shouldered bully, something which suggested brute strength, brute courage and brute ferocity; but there was something infinitely more sinister in the mincing, precise walk of his smaller companion, who advanced with an odd sort of gait, placing one foot precisely before the other like a tango dancer performing to the rhythm of inaudible music.

"Judas Iscariot and Company," de Grandin whispered to me as the queerly assorted couple set foot on the drawbridge; then with an imperative wave of his hand he beckoned them toward the house and set off up the driveway at a rapid walk. "We must not let them get close enough to suspect," he whispered, quickening his pace. "All cats are gray in the dark, and we much resemble their friends at a distance, but it is better that we take no chances."

Once or twice the other two called to us, demanding to know if we had encountered resistance, but de Grandin's only answer was another gesture urging them to haste, and we were still some ten feet in the lead when we reached the door, swung it open and slipped into the house, awaiting the others' advent.

The candles burned with a flickering, uncertain light, scarcely more than staining the darkness flooding the big stone hall as the two men trailed us through the door. By the table, the candlelight falling full upon her mutilated face, stood Clarimonde Ducharme, her hideously distorted eyes rolling pathetically in their elongated sockets as she turned her head from side to side in an effort to get a better view of the intruders.

A shrill, cackling laugh burst from the smaller man. "Look at that, Henri," he bade, catching his breath with an odd, sucking sound. "Look at that. That's *my* work; isn't it a masterpiece?"

Mockingly, he snatched the wide-brimmed soft black-felt hat from his head, laid it over his heart, then swept it to the floor as he bowed profoundly to the girl. "*Señorita hermosa, yo beso sus manos!*" he declared, then burst into another cackle of cachinnating laughter. As he removed his headgear I observed he was bald as an egg, thickly wrinkled, and wore a monocle of dark glass in his right eye.

His companion growled an inarticulate comment, then turned toward us with an expectant look. "Now?" he asked. "Shall I do it now and get it over?"

"*Si, como no?*—certainly, why not?" the smaller man lisped. "They've served their purpose, have they not?"

"Right," the big man returned. "They did the job, and dead men tell no tales——"

There was murderous menace in every movement of his big body as he swaggered toward de Grandin. "Come, little duckie," he bade mockingly in *gamin* French, "come and be killed. We can't have you running loose and babbling tales of what you've seen tonight the first time you get your hide full of *vin ordinaire*. Say your prayers, if you know any; you've precious little time to do it. Come, duckie——" As he advanced he thrust his hand beneath his ill-fitting jacket and drew a knife of fearsome proportions, whetting it softly against

the heel of his hand, smiling to himself as though anticipating a rare bit of sport.

De Grandin gave ground before the other's onslaught. Two or three backward running steps he took, increasing the distance between them, then paused.

With a flick of his left hand he swept the disguising hood from his features and smiled almost tenderly at the astonished bully. "*Monsieur,*" he announced softly, "it sometimes happens that the weasel discovers the duck he hunts to be an eagle in disguise. So it would seem tonight. You have three seconds to live; make the most of them. *Un—deux—trois!*" The spiteful, whip-like report of his pistol sounded sharp punctuation to his third count, and the bravo stumbled back a step, an expression of amazement on his coarse face, a tiny, bruised-looking circle almost precisely bisecting the line of heavy, black brows which met above his nose.

"Wha—what?" the smaller villain began in a strangled, frightened scream, wheeling on de Grandin and snatching at a weapon beneath his cloak.

But George Ducharme leaped out of the darkness like a lion avenging the slaughter of its mate, and bore him, screaming madly, to the floor. "At last, Leandro Ruiz—at last!" he shouted exultantly, fastening his fingers on the other's thin, corded neck and pressing his thumb into the sallow, flaccid flesh. "At last I've got you! You killed my wife, you deformed my baby, you've made me live in a hell of fear for eighteen years; but now I've got you—*I've got you!*"

"*Eh bien,* have a care, *Monsieur,* you are unduly rough!" de Grandin protested, tapping Ducharme's shoulder gently. "Be careful, I implore you!"

"What?" George Ducharme cried angrily, looking up at the diminutive Frenchman, but retaining his strangling hold on his foeman's throat. "D'ye mean I'm not to treat this dog as he deserves?"

The other's narrow shoulders rose nearly level with his ears in an eloquent shrug. "I did but caution you, my friend," he answered mildly. "When one is very angry one easily forgets one's strength. Be careful, or you kill him too swiftly.

"Come, Friend Trowbridge, the night is fine outside. Let us admire the view."

THE prisoners in the bedroom were only too glad to take their departure without stopping to inquire concerning their late employer. From remarks they dropped while we hunted clothing to replace the conspicuous black tights of which we had relieved them, I gathered they had distrusted Ruiz's good faith, and insisted on payment in advance. That Monsieur Ruiz had left, leaving no address, and consequently would not be in position to extort return of his fee with the aid of the gigantic Henri was the best possible news we could have given them, and they took speedy farewell of us.

The following day de Grandin and I set out for the North, accompanied by the Ducharmes. Clarimonde traveled closely veiled, and we occupied a drawing-room suite on the B. & O. fast train which bore us from Washington to Harrisonville. The first night in New Jersey was spent at my house, Clarimonde keeping closely to her room, lest Nora McGinnis, my faithful but garrulous Irish household factotum, behold her mutilated features and spread news of them along the kitchen-door telegraph line.

A suite of rooms at Mercy Hospital was engaged the following day, and true to his promise, de Grandin took up residence in the institution, eating, sleeping and passing his entire time within half a minute's walk of his patient.

What passed in the private operating-room Ducharme's money made possible for his daughter's case I did not know, for the press of my own neglected practise kept me busy through most of the daylight hours, and de Grandin performed his work unassisted except by three special nurses who, like him, spent their entire time on duty in the special suite secured for Clarimonde.

Nearly three months passed before my office telephone shrilled one bright Sunday morning and de Grandin's excited voice informed me he was about to remove the bandages from his charge. Ten minutes later, out of breath with haste, I stood in the comfortably furnished sitting-room of Clarimonde's suite, and stared fascinated at the little Frenchman who posed and postured beside his patient like a lecturer about to begin his discourse.

"My friends," he announced, sweeping the circle composed of Ducharme, the nurses and me with twinkling eyes, "this is one of the supreme moments of my life. Should my workmanship be successful, I shall proceed forthwith to get most vilely, piggishly intoxicated. If I have failed"—he paused dramatically, then drew a small, silver-mounted automatic pistol from his pocket and laid it on the table beside him—"if I have failed, Friend Trowbridge, I beseech you, write in the death certificate that my suicide was induced by a broken heart. *Allons.*"

With a pair of surgical scissors he slit the outermost layer of bandages about the girl's face and began unwinding the white gauze with slow, deliberate movements.

"*A-a-ah!*" The long-drawn exclamation came unbidden from all of us in chorus.

The wrinkled, blotched, leather-like skin which had covered the girl's face had, by some alchemy employed by de Grandin, been bleached to an incredibly beautiful shade of light, suntanned *écru*, smooth as country cream and iridescent as an alloy of gold and platinum. Above a high, straight brow of creamy whiteness her soft auburn hair was loosely dressed in a gleaming diadem of sun-stained metallic luster. But it was the strange, exotic molding of her features which brought our hearts into our eyes as we looked. Her high, straight forehead continued down into her perfectly formed nose without the slightest indication of a curve — like the cameo-fine formation of the most beautiful faces found on recovered artistic treasures of ancient Greece. With consummate skill the Frenchman had made the enlargement of her eyes an ally in his work, for while he had somewhat decreased the length of the cuts with which Ruiz had mutilated the girl's eyes, he had left the openings larger than normal and raised them slightly at the outer corners, imparting to the face which would have otherwise been somewhat too severe in its utter classicism a charming hint of Oriental piquancy. The mouth was still somewhat large, but perfect in its outline, and the lips were thin, beautifully molded lines of more than usual redness, in repose presenting an expression of singular sweetness, retracting only slightly when she smiled, giving her face an expression of languid, faint amusement which was as provocative in its appeal as the far-famed smile of Mona Lisa.

"My God — Clarimonde, you're *beautiful!*" Ducharme cried brokenly, and stumbled across the floor to drop kneeling before his daughter, burying his face in her lap and sobbing hysterically.

"*Pipe d'une souris!*" de Grandin pocketed his pistol and bent above his patient. "Jules de Grandin and none other shall have the first kiss from these so beautiful lips!" He placed a

resounding salute upon the girl's scarlet mouth, then turned toward the adjoining room.

"Behind that door," he announced, "I have secreted several pints of the hospital's finest medicinal brandy, Friend Trowbridge. See to it, if you please, that I am not disturbed until I say otherwise. For the next four and twenty hours Jules de Grandin shall be delightfully engaged in acquiring the noblest case of delirium tremens the institution's staff has ever treated!"

The Haunted Lake

***By* A. LESLIE**

Gray coils of mist that wreathe and writhe
  Above the leprous scum
That shrouds the dull, dead waters
  Where the fettered waves are dumb.

Gray, tortured mists that twist and turn
  And vainly seek to rise
And drown the mocking moonlight
  In the devil-haunted skies.

Midnight! A witch wind veils the moon,
  The gray mists swirl and sink;
And ghostly faces, green with scum,
  Leer from the black tarn's brink.

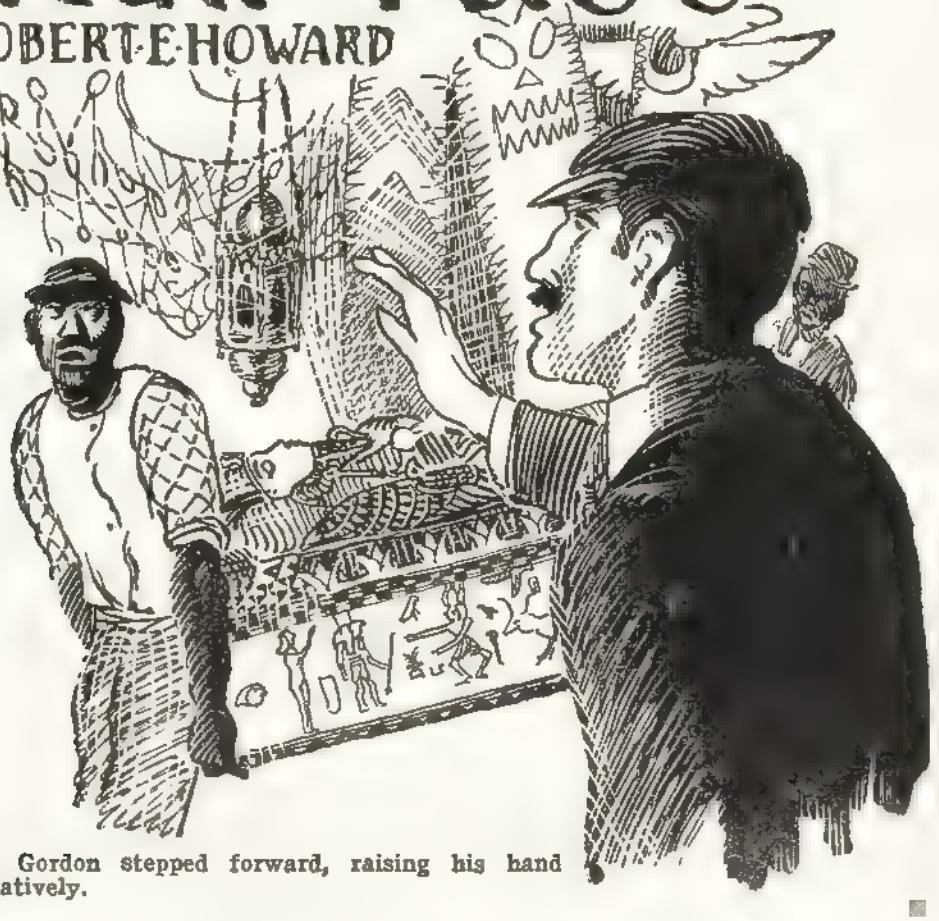
The sullen waters mutter
  As they lap the festering shore,
For now their mucid surface
  Is a lurid ballroom floor!

Strange fleshless shapes flit through the gloom
  To dance a mad quadrille,
While moaning things step starkly
  In a weird demon drill.

The wild wind sweeps the shuddering sky,
  The wan moon struggles free:
The ghost mists writhe, the nameless shapes
  Shriek shrilly as they flee!

Skull-Face

by ROBERT E. HOWARD



"Halt!" Gordon stepped forward, raising his hand authoritatively.

The Story Thus Far

STEPHEN COSTIGAN, an American hashish addict in London's Limehouse district, is released from the hashish-craving by a skull-faced man known to his slaves as the Master, and as Kathulos of Egypt, who gives him an elixir so strong that he is consumed by fiery tortures when he is deprived of it. Costigan is sent by the Master to murder Sir Haldred Frenton, disguised in the hide of a giant ape, but gives himself up to John Gordon of the British secret police, and Gordon raids the Master's retreat in Limehouse, rescuing Costigan, who has been sent ahead as a decoy. The Master and his fanatics escape through a snake-infested tunnel, to continue their plots to overthrow the white race and establish a black empire. With him goes Zuleika, who has given Costigan enough of the elixir to last him four days.

13. The Blind Beggar Who Rode

"He seemed a beggar such as lags
Looking for crusts and ale."
—Chesterton.

THE cold gray dawn was stealing over the river as we stood in the deserted bar of the Temple of Dreams. Gordon was questioning the two men who had remained on guard outside the building while their unfortunate companions went in to explore the tunnel.

"As soon as we heard the whistle, sir, Leary and Murken rushed the bar and broke into the opium room, while we waited here at the bar door according to orders. Right away several ragged dopers came tumbling out and we grabbed them. But no one else came out and we heard noth-

ing from Leary and Murken; so we just waited until you came, sir."

"You saw nothing of a giant negro, or of the Chinaman Yun Shatu?"

"No, sir. After a while the patrolmen arrived and we threw a cordon around the house, but no one was seen."

Gordon shrugged his shoulders; a few cursory questions had satisfied him that the captives were harmless addicts and he had them released.

"You are sure no one else came out?"

"Yes, sir—no, wait a moment. A wretched old blind beggar did come out, all rags and dirt and with a ragged girl leading him. We stopped him but didn't hold him—a wretch like that couldn't be harmful."

"No?" Gordon jerked out. "Which way did he go?"

"The girl led him down the street to the next block and then an automobile stopped and they got in and drove off, sir."

Gordon glared at him.

"The stupidity of the London detective has rightfully become an international jest," he said acidly. "No doubt it never occurred to you as being strange that a Limehouse beggar should ride about in his own automobile."

Then impatiently waving aside the man, who sought to speak further, he turned to me and I saw the lines of weariness beneath his eyes.

"Mr. Costigan, if you will come to my apartment we may be able to clear up some few things."

14. The Black Empire

"Oh the new spears dipped in life-blood as the woman shrieked in vain!
Oh the days before the English! When will those days come again?"
—Mundy.

GORDON struck a match and absently allowed it to flicker and go out in his hand. His Turkish cigarette hung unlighted between his fingers.

"This is the most logical conclusion to be reached," he was saying. "The weak link in our chain was lack of men. But curse it, one can not round up an army at two o'clock in the morning, even with the aid of Scotland Yard. I went on to Limehouse, leaving orders for a number of patrolmen to follow me as quickly as they could be gotten together, and to throw a cordon about the house.

"They arrived too late to prevent the Master's servants slipping out of side doors and windows, no doubt, as they could easily do with only Finnegan and Hansen on guard at the front of the building. However, they arrived in time to prevent the Master himself from slipping out in that way—no doubt he lingered to effect his disguise and was caught in that manner. He owes his escape to his craft and boldness and to the carelessness of Finnegan and Hansen. The girl who accompanied him——"

"She was Zuleika, without doubt." I answered listlessly, wondering anew what shackles bound her to the Egyptian sorcerer.

"You owe your life to her," Gordon rapped, lighting another match. "We were standing in the shadows in front of the warehouse, waiting for the hour to strike, and of course ignorant as to what was going on in the house, when a girl appeared at one of the barred windows and begged us for God's sake to do something, that a man was being murdered. So we broke in at once. However, she was not to be seen when we entered."

"She returned to the room, no doubt," I muttered, "and was forced to accompany the Master. God grant he knows nothing of her trickery."

"I do not know," said Gordon, dropping the charred match stem, "whether she guessed at our true identity or whether she just made the appeal in desperation.

"However, the main point is this: evidence points to the fact that, on hearing the whistle, Leary and Murken invaded Yun Shatu's from the

front at the same instant my three men and I made our attack on the warehouse front. As it took us some seconds to batter down the door, it is logical to suppose that they found the secret door and entered the tunnel before we effected an entrance into the warehouse.

"The Master, knowing our plans beforehand, and being aware that an invasion would be made through the tunnel and having long ago made preparations for such an exigency——"

An involuntary shudder shook me.

"——the Master worked the lever that opened the chest—the screams you heard as you lay upon the altar were the death shrieks of Leary and Murken. Then, leaving the Chinaman behind to finish you, the Master and the rest descended into the tunnel—incredible as it seems—and threading their way unharmed among the serpents, entered Yun Shatu's house and escaped therefrom as I have said."

"That seems impossible. Why should not the snakes turn on them?"

Gordon finally ignited his cigarette and puffed a few seconds before replying.

"The reptiles might still have been giving their full and hideous attention to the dying men, or else—I have on previous occasions been confronted with indisputable proof of the Master's dominance over beasts and reptiles of even the lowest or most dangerous orders. How he and his slaves passed unhurt among those scaly fiends must remain, at present, one of the many unsolved mysteries pertaining to that strange man."

I stirred restlessly in my chair. This brought up a point for the purpose of clearing up which I had come to Gordon's neat but bizarre apartments.

"You have not yet told me," I said abruptly, "who this man is and what is his mission."

"As to who he is, I can only say that he is known as you name him—the Master. I have never seen him unmasked, nor do I know his real name nor his nationality."

"I can enlighten you to an extent there," I broke in. "I have seen him unmasked and have heard the name his slaves call him."

Gordon's eyes blazed and he leaned forward.

"His name," I continued, "is Kathulos and he claims to be an Egyptian."

"Kathulos!" Gordon repeated. "You say he claims to be an Egyptian—have you any reason for doubting his claim of that nationality?"

"He may be of Egypt," I answered slowly, "but he is different, somehow, from any human I ever saw or hope to see. Great age might account for some of his peculiarities, but there are certain lineal differences that my anthropological studies tell me have been present since birth—features which would be abnormal to any other man but which are perfectly normal in Kathulos. That sounds paradoxical, I admit, but to appreciate fully the horrid inhumanness of the man, you would have to see him yourself."

GORDON sat all attention while I swiftly sketched the appearance of the Egyptian as I remembered him—and that appearance was indelibly etched on my brain forever.

As I finished he nodded.

"As I have said, I never saw Kathulos except when disguised as a beggar, a leper or some such thing—when he was fairly swathed in rags. Still, I too have been impressed with a strange *difference* about him—something that is not present in other men."

Gordon tapped his knee with his fingers—a habit of his when deeply engrossed by a problem of some sort.

"You have asked as to the mission of this man," he began slowly. "I will tell you all I know.

"My position with the British government is a unique and peculiar one.

I hold what might be called a roving commission—an office created solely for the purpose of suiting my special needs. As a secret service official during the war, I convinced the powers of a need of such office and of my ability to fill it.

"Somewhat over seventeen months ago I was sent to South Africa to investigate the unrest which has been growing among the natives of the interior ever since the World War and which has of late assumed alarming proportions. There I first got on the track of this man Kathulos. I found, in roundabout ways, that Africa was a seething cauldron of rebellion from Morocco to Cape Town. The old, old vow had been made again—the negroes and the Mohammedans, banded together, should drive the white men into the sea.

"This pact has been made before but always, hitherto, broken. Now, however, I sensed a giant intellect and a monstrous genius behind the veil, a genius powerful enough to accomplish this union and hold it together. Working entirely on hints and vague whispered clues, I followed the trail up through Central Africa and into Egypt. There, at last, I came upon definite evidence that such a man existed. The whispers hinted of a living dead man—a *skull-faced* man. I learned that this man was the high priest of the mysterious Scorpion society of northern Africa. He was spoken of variously as Skull-face, the Master, and the Scorpion.

"Following a trail of bribed officials and filched state secrets, I at last trailed him to Alexandria, where I had my first sight of him in a dive in the native quarter—disguised as a leper. I heard him distinctly addressed as 'Mighty Scorpion' by the natives, but he escaped me.

"All trace vanished then; the trail ran out entirely until rumors of strange happenings in London reached me and I came back to England, to investigate an apparent leak in the war office.

"As I thought, the Scorpion had preceded me. This man, whose education and craft transcend anything I ever met with, is simply the leader and instigator of a world-wide movement such as the world has never seen before. He plots, in a word, the overthrow of the white races!

"His ultimate aim is a black empire, with himself as emperor of the world! And to that end he has banded together in one monstrous conspiracy the black, the brown and the yellow."

"I understand now what Yussef Ali meant when he said 'the days of the empire'," I muttered.

"Exactly," Gordon rapped with suppressed excitement. "Kathulos' power is unlimited and unguessed. Like an octopus his tentacles stretch to the high places of civilization and the far corners of the world. And his main weapon is—dope! He has flooded Europe and no doubt America with opium and hashish, and in spite of all effort it has been impossible to discover the break in the barriers through which the hellish stuff is coming. With this he ensnares and enslaves men and women.

"You have told me of the aristocratic men and women you saw coming to Yun Shatu's dive. Without doubt they were dope addicts—for, as I said, the habit lurks in high places—holders of governmental positions, no doubt, coming to trade for the stuff they craved and giving in return state secrets, inside information and promise of protection for the Master's crimes.

"Oh, he does not work haphazardly! Before ever the black flood breaks, he will be prepared; if he has his way, the governments of the white races will be honeycombs of corruption—the strongest men of the white races will be dead. The white men's secrets of war will be his. When it

comes, I look for a simultaneous uprising against white supremacy, of all the colored races—races who, in the last war, learned the white men's ways of battle, and who, led by such a man as Kathulos and armed with white men's finest weapons, will be almost invincible.

"A steady stream of rifles and ammunition has been pouring into East Africa and it was not until I discovered the source that it was stopped. I found that a staid and reliable Scotch firm was smuggling these arms among the natives and I found more: the manager of this firm was an opium slave. That was enough. I saw Kathulos' hand in the matter. The manager was arrested and committed suicide in his cell—that is only one of the many situations with which I am called upon to deal.

"Again, the case of Major Fairlan Morley. He, like myself, held a very flexible commission and had been sent to the Transvaal to work upon the same case. He sent to London a number of secret papers for safekeeping. They arrived some weeks ago and were put in a bank vault. The letter accompanying them gave explicit instructions that they were to be delivered to no one but the major himself, when he called for them in person, or in event of his death, to myself.

"As soon as I learned that he had sailed from Africa I sent trusted men to Bordeaux, where he intended to make his first landing in Europe. They did not succeed in saving the major's life, but they certified his death, for they found his body in a deserted ship whose hulk was stranded on the beach. Efforts were made to keep the affair a secret but somehow it leaked into the papers with the result——"

"I begin to understand why I was to impersonate the unfortunate major," I interrupted.

"Exactly. A false beard furnished you, and your black hair dyed blond, you would have presented yourself at the bank, received the papers from the banker, who knew Major Morley just intimately enough to be deceived by your appearance, and the papers would have then fallen into the hands of the Master.

"I CAN only guess at the contents of those papers, for events have been taking place too swiftly for me to call for and obtain them. But they must deal with subjects closely connected with the activities of Kathulos. How he learned of them and of the provisions of the letter accompanying them, I have no idea, but as I said, London is honeycombed with his spies.

"In my search for clues, I often frequented Limehouse disguised as you first saw me. I went often to the Temple of Dreams and even once managed to enter the back room, for I suspected some sort of rendezvous in the rear of the building. The absence of any exit baffled me and I had no time to search for secret doors before I was ejected by the giant black man Hassim, who had no suspicion of my true identity. I noticed that very often the leper entered or left Yun Shatu's, and finally it was borne on me that past a shadow of doubt this supposed leper was the Scorpion himself.

"That night you discovered me on the couch in the opium room, I had come there with no especial plan in mind. Seeing Kathulos leaving, I determined to rise and follow him, but you spoiled that."

He fingered his chin and laughed grimly.

"I was an amateur boxing champion in Oxford," said he, "but Tom Cribb himself could not have withstood that blow—or have dealt it."

"I regret it as I regret few things."

"No need to apologize. You saved my life immediately afterward—I was stunned, but not too much to

know that that brown devil Yussef Ali was burning to cut out my heart."

"How did you come to be at Sir Haldred Frenton's estate? And how is it that you did not raid Yun Shatu's dive?"

"I did not have the place raided because I knew somehow Kathulos would be warned and our efforts would come to naught. I was at Sir Haldred's that night because I have contrived to spend at least part of each night with him since he returned from the Congo. I anticipated an attempt upon his life when I learned from his own lips that he was preparing, from the studies he made on this trip, a treatise on the secret native societies of West Africa. He hinted that the disclosures he intended to make therein might prove sensational, to say the least. Since it is to Kathulos' advantage to destroy such men as might be able to arouse the Western world to its danger, I knew that Sir Haldred was a marked man. Indeed, two distinct attempts were made upon his life on his journey to the coast from the African interior. So I put two trusted men on guard and they are at their post even now.

"Roaming about the darkened house, I heard the noise of your entry, and, warning my men, I stole down to intercept you. At the time of our conversation, Sir Haldred was sitting in his unlighted study, a Scotland Yard man with drawn pistol on each side of him. Their vigilance no doubt accounts for Yussef Ali's failure to attempt what you were sent to do.

"Something in your manner convinced me in spite of yourself," he meditated. "I will admit I had some bad moments of doubt as I waited in the darkness that precedes dawn, outside the warehouse."

Gordon rose suddenly and going to a strong box which stood in a corner of the room, drew thence a thick envelope.

"Although Kathulos has checkmated me at almost every move," he said, "I have not been entirely idle. Noting the frequenters of Yun Shatu's, I have compiled a partial list of the Egyptian's right-hand men, and their records. What you have told me has enabled me to complete that list. As we know, his henchmen are scattered all over the world, and there are possibly hundreds of them here in London. However, this is a list of those I believe to be in his closest council, now with him in England. He told you himself that few even of his followers ever saw him unmasked."

We bent together over the list, which contained the following names: "Yun Shatu, Hongkong Chinese, suspected opium smuggler—keeper of Temple of Dreams—resident of Limehouse seven years. Hassim, ex-Senegalese chief — wanted in French Congo for murder. Santiago, negro—fled from Haiti under suspicion of voodoo worship atrocities. Yar Khan, Afridi, record unknown. Yussef Ali, Moor, slave-dealer in Morocco—suspected of being a German spy in the World War—an instigator of the Fellaheen Rebellion on the upper Nile. Ganra Singh, Lahore, India, Sikh—smuggler of arms into Afghanistan—took an active part in the Lahore and Delhi riots—suspected of murder on two occasions—a dangerous man. Stephen Costigan, American—resident in England since the war—hashish addict—man of remarkable strength. Li Kung, northern China, opium smuggler."

Lines were drawn significantly through three names—mine, Li Kung's and Yussef Ali's. Nothing was written next to mine, but following Li Kung's name was scrawled briefly in Gordon's rambling characters: "Shot by John Gordon during the raid on Yun Shatu's." And following the name of Yussef Ali: "Killed by Stephen Costigan during the Yun Shatu raid."

I laughed mirthlessly. Black empire or not, Yussef Ali would never hold Zuleika in his arms, for he had never risen from where I felled him.

"I know not," said Gordon somberly as he folded the list and replaced it in the envelope, "what power Kathulos has that draws together black men and yellow men to serve him—that unites world-old foes. Hindoo, Mŏslem and pagan are among his followers. And back in the mists of the East where mysterious and gigantic forces are at work, this uniting is culminating on a monstrous scale."

He glanced at his watch.

"It is nearly ten. Make yourself at home here, Mr. Costigan, while I visit Scotland Yard and see if any clue has been found as to Kathulos' new quarters. I believe that the webs are closing on him, and with your aid I promise you we will have the gang located within a week at most."

15. The Mark of the Tulwar

"The fed wolf curls by his drowsy mate
In a tight-trod earth; but the lean wolves wait."

—Mundy.

I SAT alone in John Gordon's apartments and laughed mirthlessly. In spite of the elixir's stimulus, the strain of the previous night, with its loss of sleep and its heartrending actions, was telling on me. My mind was a chaotic whirl wherein the faces of Gordon, Kathulos and Zuleika shifted with numbing swiftness. All the mass of information Gordon had given to me seemed jumbled and incoherent.

Through this state of being, one fact stood out boldly. I must find the latest hiding-place of the Egyptian and get Zuleika out of his hands—if indeed she still lived.

A week, Gordon had said — I laughed again—a week and I would be beyond aiding anyone. I had found the proper amount of elixir to use—knew the minimum amount my system required—and knew that I could make the flask last me four days at most. Four days! Four days in which to comb the rat-holes of Limehouse and Chinatown—four days in which to ferret out, somewhere in the mazes of East End, the lair of Kathulos.

I burned with impatience to begin, but nature rebelled, and staggering to a couch, I fell upon it and was asleep instantly.

Then someone was shaking me.

"Wake up, Mr. Costigan!"

I sat up, blinking. Gordon stood over me, his face haggard.

"There's devil's work done, Costigan! The Scorpion has struck again!"

I sprang up, still half asleep and only partly realizing what he was saying. He helped me into my coat, thrust my hat at me, and then his firm grip on my arm was propelling me out of his door and down the stairs. The street lights were blazing; I had slept an incredible time.

"A logical victim!" I was aware that my companion was saying. "He should have notified me the instant of his arrival!"

"I don't understand——" I began dazedly.

We were at the curb now and Gordon hailed a taxi, giving the address of a small and unassuming hotel in a staid and prim section of the city.

"The Baron Rokoff," he rapped as we whirled along at reckless speed, "a Russian free-lance, connected with the war office. He returned from Mongolia yesterday and apparently went into hiding. Undoubtedly he had learned something vital in regard to the slow waking of the East. He had not yet communicated with us, and I had no idea that he was in England until just now."

"And you learned——"

"The baron was found in his room, his dead body mutilated in a frightful manner!"

The respectable and conventional hotel which the doomed baron had chosen for his hiding-place was in a state of mild uproar, suppressed by the police. The management had attempted to keep the matter quiet, but somehow the guests had learned of the atrocity and many were leaving in haste—or preparing to, as the police were holding all for investigation.

The baron's room, which was on the top floor, was in a state to defy description. Not even in the great war have I seen a more complete shambles. Nothing had been touched; all remained just as the chambermaid had found it a half-hour since. Tables and chairs lay shattered on the floor, and the furniture, floor and walls were spattered with blood. The baron, a tall, muscular man in life, lay in the middle of the room, a fearful spectacle. His skull had been cleft to the brows, a deep gash under his left armpit had shorn through his ribs, and his left arm hung by a shred of flesh. The cold bearded face was set in a look of indescribable horror.

"Some heavy, curved weapon must have been used," said Gordon, "something like a saber, wielded with terrific force. See where a chance blow sank inches deep into the window-sill. And again, the thick back of this heavy chair has been split like a shingle. A saber, surely."

"A tulwar," I muttered, somberly. "Do you not recognize the handiwork of the Central Asian butcher? Yar Khan has been here."

"The Afghan! He came across the roofs, of course, and descended to the window-ledge by means of a knotted rope made fast to something on the edge of the roof. About one-thirty the maid, passing through the corridor, heard a terrific commotion in the baron's room—smashing of chairs and a sudden short shriek which died abruptly into a ghastly gurgle and then ceased—to the sound of heavy blows, curiously muffled, such as a sword might make when driven deep into human flesh. Then all noises stopped suddenly.

"She called the manager and they tried the door and, finding it locked, and receiving no answer to their shouts, opened it with the desk key. Only the corpse was there, but the window was open. This is strangely unlike Kathulos' usual procedure. It lacks subtlety. Often his victims have appeared to have died from natural causes. I scarcely understand."

"I see little difference in the outcome," I answered. "There is nothing that can be done to apprehend the murderer as it is."

"True," Gordon scowled. "We know who did it but there is no proof—not even a finger print. Even if we knew where the Afghan is hiding and arrested him, we could prove nothing—there would be a score of men to swear alibis for him. The baron returned only yesterday. Kathulos probably did not know of his arrival until tonight. He knew that on the morrow Rokoff would make known his presence to me and impart what he learned in northern Asia. The Egyptian knew he must strike quickly, and lacking time to prepare a safer and more elaborate form of murder, he sent the Afridi with his tulwar. There is nothing we can do, at least not until we discover the Scorpion's hiding-place; what the baron had learned in Mongolia, we shall never know, but that it dealt with the plans and aspirations of Kathulos, we may be sure."

We went down the stairs again and out on the street, accompanied by one of the Scotland Yard men, Hansen. Gordon suggested that we walk back to his apartment and I greeted the opportunity to let the cool night air blow some of the cobwebs out of my mazed brain.

As we walked along the deserted streets, Gordon suddenly cursed savagely.

"This is a veritable labyrinth we are following, leading nowhere! Here, in the very heart of civilization's metropolis, the direst enemy of that civilization commits crimes of the most outrageous nature and goes free! We are children, wandering in the night, struggling with an unseen evil—dealing with an incarnate devil, of whose true identity we know nothing and whose true ambitions we can only guess.

"Never have we managed to arrest one of the Egyptian's direct henchmen, and the few dupes and tools of his we have apprehended have died mysteriously before they could tell us anything. Again I repeat: what strange power has Kathulos that dominates these men of different creeds and races? The men in London with him are, of course, mostly renegades, slaves of dope, but his tentacles stretch all over the East. Some dominance is his: the power that sent the Chinaman, Li Kung, back to kill you, in the face of certain death; that sent Yar Khan the Moslem over the roofs of London to do murder; that holds Zuleika the Circassian in unseen bonds of slavery.

"Of course we know," he continued after a brooding silence, "that the East has secret societies which are behind and above all considerations of creeds. There are cults in Africa and the Orient whose origin dates back to Ophir and the fall of Atlantis. This man must be a power in some or possibly all of these societies. Why, outside the Jews, I know of no Oriental race which is so cordially despised by the other Eastern races, as the Egyptians! Yet here we have a man, an Egyptian by his own word, controlling the lives and destinies of orthodox Moslems, Hindoos, Shintos and devil-worshipers. It's unnatural.

"Have you ever"—he turned to me abruptly—"heard the ocean mentioned in connection with Kathulos?"

"Never."

"There is a widespread superstition in northern Africa, based on a very ancient legend, that the great leader of the colored races would come out of the sea! And I once heard a Berber speak of the Scorpion as 'The Son of the Ocean.'"

"That is a term of respect among that tribe, is it not?"

"Yes; still I wonder sometimes."

16. The Mummy Who Laughed

"Laughing as littered skulls that lie
After lost battles turn to the sky
An everlasting laugh."
—Chesterton.

"A SHOP open this late," Gordon remarked suddenly.

A fog had descended on London and along the quiet street we were traversing the lights glimmered with the peculiar reddish haze characteristic of such atmospheric conditions. Our footfalls echoed drearily. Even in the heart of a great city there are always sections which seem overlooked and forgotten. Such a street was this. Not even a policeman was in sight.

The shop which had attracted Gordon's attention was just in front of us, on the same side of the street. There was no sign over the door, merely some sort of emblem something like a dragon. Light flowed from the open doorway and the small show windows on each side. As it was neither a café nor the entrance to a hotel we found ourselves idly speculating over its reason for being open. Ordinarily, I suppose, neither of us would have given the matter a thought, but our nerves were so keyed up that we found ourselves instinctively suspicious of anything out of the ordinary. Then something occurred which was distinctly out of the ordinary.

A very tall, very thin man, considerably stooped, suddenly loomed up out of the fog in front of us, and

beyond the shop. I had only a glance of him—an impression of incredible gauntness, of worn, wrinkled garments, a high silk hat drawn close over the brows, a face entirely hidden by a muffler; then he turned aside and entered the shop. A cold wind whispered down the street, twisting the fog into wispy ghosts, but the coldness that came upon me transcended the wind's.

"Gordon!" I exclaimed in a fierce, low voice; "my senses are no longer reliable or else Kathulos himself has just gone into that house!"

Gordon's eyes blazed. We were now close to the shop, and lengthening his strides into a run he hurled himself into the door, the detective and I close upon his heels.

A weird assortment of merchandise met our eyes. Antique weapons covered the walls, and the floor was piled high with curious things. Maori idols shouldered Chinese josses, and suits of mediæval armor bulked darkly against stacks of rare Oriental rugs and Latin-make shawls. The place was an antique shop. Of the figure who had aroused our interest we saw nothing.

An old man clad bizarrely in red fez, brocaded jacket and Turkish slippers came from the back of the shop; he was a Levantine of some sort.

"You wish something, sirs?"

"You keep open rather late," Gordon said abruptly, his eyes traveling swiftly over the shop for some secret hiding-place that might conceal the object of our search.

"Yes, sir. My customers number many eccentric professors and students who keep very irregular hours. Often the night boats unload special pieces for me and very often I have customers later than this. I remain open all night, sir."

"We are merely looking around," Gordon returned, and in an aside to Hansen: "Go to the back and stop anyone who tries to leave that way."

Hansen nodded and strolled casually to the rear of the shop. The back door was clearly visible to our view, through a vista of antique furniture and tarnished hangings strung up for exhibition. We had followed the Scorpion—if he it was—so closely that I did not believe he would have had time to traverse the full length of the shop and make his exit without our having seen him as we came in. For our eyes had been on the rear door ever since we had entered.

Gordon and I browsed around casually among the curios, handling and discussing some of them but I have no idea as to their nature. The Levantine had seated himself cross-legged on a Moorish mat close to the center of the shop and apparently took only a polite interest in our explorations.

After a time Gordon whispered to me: "There is no advantage in keeping up this pretense. We have looked everywhere the Scorpion might be hiding, in the ordinary manner. I will make known my identity and authority and we will search the entire building openly."

Even as he spoke a truck drew up outside the door and two burly negroes entered. The Levantine seemed to have expected them, for he merely waved them toward the back of the shop and they responded with a grunt of understanding.

Gordon and I watched them closely as they made their way to a large mummy-case which stood upright against the wall not far from the back. They lowered this to a level position and then started for the door, carrying it carefully between them.

"Halt!" Gordon stepped forward, raising his hand authoritatively.

"I represent Scotland Yard," he said swiftly, "and have sanction for anything I choose to do. Set that mummy down; nothing leaves this shop until we have thoroughly searched it."

The negroes obeyed without a word and my friend turned to the Levantine, who, apparently not perturbed or even interested, sat smoking a Turkish water-pipe.

"Who was that tall man who entered just before we did, and where did he go?"

"No one entered before you, sir. Or, if anyone did, I was at the back of the shop and did not see him. You are certainly at liberty to search my shop, sir."

And search it we did, with the combined craft of a secret service expert and a denizen of the underworld—while Hansen stood stolidly at his post, the two negroes standing over the carved mummy-case watched us impassively and the Levantine sitting like a sphinx on his mat, puffing a fog of smoke into the air. The whole thing had a distinct effect of unreality.

At last, baffled, we returned to the mummy-case, which was certainly long enough to conceal even a man of Kathulos' height. The thing did not appear to be sealed as is the usual custom, and Gordon opened it without difficulty. A formless shape, swathed in moldering wrappings, met our eyes. Gordon parted some of the wrappings and revealed an inch or so of withered, brownish, leathery arm. He shuddered involuntarily as he touched it, as a man will do at the touch of a reptile or some inhumanly cold thing. Taking a small metal idol from a stand near by, he rapped on the shrunken breast and the arm. Each gave out a solid thumping, like some sort of wood.

Gordon shrugged his shoulders. "Dead for two thousand years anyway and I don't suppose I should risk destroying a valuable mummy simply to prove what we know to be true."

He closed the case again.

"The mummy may have crumbled some, even from this much exposure, but perhaps it did not."

This last was addressed to the Levantine who replied merely by a courteous gesture of his hand, and the negroes once more lifted the case and carried it to the truck, where they loaded it on, and a moment later mummy, truck and negroes had vanished in the fog.

Gordon still nosed about the shop, but I stood stock-still in the center of the floor. To my chaotic and dope-ridden brain I attributed it, but the sensation had been mine, that through the wrappings of the mummy's face, great eyes had burned into mine, eyes like pools of yellow fire, that seared my soul and froze me where I stood. And as the case had been carried through the door, I knew that the lifeless thing in it, dead, God only knows how many centuries, was *laughing*, hideously and silently.

17. The Dead Man from the Sea

"The blind gods roar and rave and dream
Of all cities under the sea."
—Chesterton.

GORDON puffed savagely at his Turkish cigarette, staring abstractedly and unseeingly at Hansen, who sat opposite him.

"I suppose we must chalk up another failure against ourselves. That Levantine, Kamonos, is evidently a creature of the Egyptian's and the walls and floors of his shop are probably honeycombed with secret panels and doors which would baffle a magician."

Hansen made some answer but I said nothing. Since our return to Gordon's apartment, I had been conscious of a feeling of intense languor and sluggishness which not even my condition could account for. I knew that my system was full of the elixir—but my mind seemed strangely slow and hard of comprehension in direct contrast with the average state of my mentality when stimulated by the hellish dope.

This condition was slowly leaving me, like mist floating from the sur-

face of a lake, and I felt as if I were waking gradually from a long and unnaturally sound sleep.

Gordon was saying: "I would give a good deal to know if Kamonos is really one of Kathulos' slaves or if the Scorpion managed to make his escape through some natural exit as we entered."

"Kamonos is his servant, true enough," I found myself saying slowly, as if searching for the proper words. "As we left, I saw his gaze light upon the scorpion which is traced on my hand. His eyes narrowed, and as we were leaving he contrived to brush close against me—and to whisper in a quick low voice: 'Soho, 48.' "

Gordon came erect like a loosened steel bow.

"Indeed!" he rapped. "Why did you not tell me at the time?"

"I don't know."

My friend eyed me sharply.

"I noticed you seemed like a man intoxicated all the way from the shop," said he. "I attributed it to some aftermath of hashish. But no. Kathulos is undoubtedly a masterful disciple of Mesmer—his power over venomous reptiles shows that, and I am beginning to believe it is the real source of his power over humans.

"Somehow, the Master caught you off your guard in that shop and partly asserted his dominance over your mind. From what hidden nook he sent his thought waves to shatter your brain, I do not know, but Kathulos was somewhere in that shop, I am sure."

"He was. He was in the mummy-case."

"The mummy-case!" Gordon exclaimed rather impatiently. "That is impossible! The mummy quite filled it and not even such a thin being as the Master could have found room there."

I shrugged my shoulders, unable to argue the point but somehow sure of the truth of my statement.

"Kamonos," Gordon continued, "doubtless is not a member of the inner circle and does not know of your change of allegiance. Seeing the mark of the scorpion, he undoubtedly supposed you to be a spy of the Master's. The whole thing may be a plot to ensnare us, but I feel that the man was sincere—Soho 48 can be nothing less than the Scorpion's new rendezvous."

I too felt that Gordon was right, though a suspicion lurked in my mind.

"I secured the papers of Major Morley yesterday," he continued, "and while you slept, I went over them. Mostly they but corroborated what I already knew—touched on the unrest of the natives and repeated the theory that one vast genius was behind all. But there was one matter which interested me greatly and which I think will interest you also."

From his strong box he took a manuscript written in the close, neat characters of the unfortunate major, and in a monotonous droning voice which betrayed little of his intense excitement he read the following nightmarish narrative:

"THIS matter I consider worth jotting down—as to whether it has any bearing on the case at hand, further developments will show. At Alexandria, where I spent some weeks seeking further clues as to the identity of the man known as the Scorpion, I made the acquaintance, through my friend Ahmed Shah, of the noted Egyptologist Professor Ezra Schuyler of New York. He verified the statement made by various laymen, concerning the legend of the 'ocean-man.' This myth, handed down from generation to generation, stretches back into the very mists of antiquity and is, briefly, that some day a man shall come up out of the sea and shall lead the people of Egypt to victory over all others. This legend has spread

over the continent so that now all black races consider that it deals with the coming of a universal emperor. Professor Schuyler gave it as his opinion that the myth was somehow connected with the lost Atlantis, which, he maintains, was located between the African and South American continents and to whose inhabitants the ancestors of the Egyptians were tributary. The reasons for his connection are too lengthy and vague to note here, but following the line of his theory he told me a strange and fantastic tale. He said that a close friend of his, Von Lorfmon of Germany, a sort of free-lance scientist, now dead, was sailing off the coast of Senegal some years ago, for the purpose of investigating and classifying the rare specimens of sea-life found there. He was using for his purpose a small trading-vessel, manned by a crew of Moors, Greeks and negroes.

"Some days out of sight of land, something floating was sighted, and this object, being grappled and brought aboard, proved to be *a mummy-case of a most curious kind.* Professor Schuyler explained to me the features whereby it differed from the ordinary Egyptian style, but from his rather technical account I merely got the impression that it was a strangely shaped affair carved with characters neither cuneiform nor hieroglyphic. The case was heavily lacquered, being watertight and airtight, and Von Lorfmon had considerable difficulty in opening it. However, he managed to do so without damaging the case, and a most unusual mummy was revealed. Schuyler said that he never saw either the mummy or the case, but that from descriptions given him by the Greek skipper who was present at the opening of the case, the mummy differed as much from the ordinary man as the case differed from the conventional type.

"Examination proved that the subject had not undergone the usual procedure of mummification. All parts were intact just as in life, but the whole form was shrunk and hardened to a wood-like consistency. Cloth wrappings swathed the thing and they crumbled to dust and vanished the instant air was let in upon them.

"Von Lorfmon was impressed by the effect upon the crew. The Greeks showed no interest beyond that which would ordinarily be shown by any man, but the Moors, and even more the negroes, seemed to be rendered temporarily insane! As the case was hoisted on board, they all fell prostrate on the deck and raised a sort of worshipful chant, and it was necessary to use force in order to exclude them from the cabin wherein the mummy was exposed. A number of fights broke out between them and the Greek element of the crew, and the skipper and Von Lorfmon thought best to put back to the nearest port in all haste. The skipper attributed it to the natural aversion of seamen toward having a corpse on board, but Von Lorfmon seemed to sense a deeper meaning.

"They made port in Lagos, and that very night Von Lorfmon was murdered in his stateroom and the mummy and its case vanished. All the Moor and negro sailors deserted ship the same night. Schuyler said—and here the matter took on a most sinister and mysterious aspect—that immediately afterward this widespread unrest among the natives began to smolder and take tangible form; he connected it in some manner with the old legend.

"An aura of mystery, also, hung over Von Lorfmon's death. He had taken the mummy into his stateroom, and anticipating an attack from the fanatical crew, had carefully barred and bolted door and portholes. The skipper, a reliable man, swore that it was virtually impossible to effect an entrance from without. And what signs were present pointed to the fact

that the locks had been worked from *within*. The scientist was killed by a dagger which formed part of his collection and which was left in his breast.

"As I have said, immediately afterward the African cauldron began to seethe. Schuyler said that in his opinion the natives considered the ancient prophecy fulfilled. The mummy was *the man from the sea*.

"Schuyler gave as his opinion that the thing was the work of Atlanteans and that the man in the mummy-case was a native of lost Atlantis. How the case came to float up through the fathoms of water which cover the forgotten land, he does not venture to offer a theory. He is sure that somewhere in the ghost-ridden mazes of the African jungles the mummy has been enthroned as a god, and, inspired by the dead thing, the black warriors are gathering for a wholesale massacre. He believes, also, that some crafty Moslem is the direct moving power of the threatened rebellion."

Gordon ceased and looked up at me.

"Mummies seem to weave a weird dance through the warp of the tale," he said. "The German scientist took several pictures of the mummy with his camera, and it was after seeing these—which strangely enough were not stolen along with the thing—that Major Morley began to think himself on the brink of some monstrous discovery. His diary reflects his state of mind and becomes incoherent—his condition seems to have bordered on insanity. What did he learn to unbalance him so? Do you suppose that the mesmeric spells of Kathulos were used against him?"

"These pictures——" I began.

"They fell into Schuyler's hands and he gave one to Morley. I found it among the manuscripts."

He handed the thing to me, watching me narrowly. I stared, then rose unsteadily and poured myself a tumbler of wine.

"Not a dead idol in a voodoo hut," I said shakily, "but a monster animated by fearsome life, roaming the world for victims. Morley had seen the Master—that is why his brain crumbled. Gordon, as I hope to live again, *that face is the face of Kathulos!*"

Gordon stared wordlessly at me.

"The Master hand, Gordon," I laughed. A certain grim enjoyment penetrated the mists of my horror, at the sight of the steel-nerved Englishman struck speechless, doubtless for the first time in his life.

He moistened his lips and said in a scarcely recognizable voice, "Then, in God's name, Costigan, nothing is stable or certain, and mankind hovers at the brink of untold abysses of nameless horror. If that dead monster found by Von Lorfmon be in truth the Scorpion, brought to life in some hideous fashion, what can mortal effort do against him?"

"The mummy at Kamonos'——" I began.

"Aye, the man whose flesh, hardened by a thousand years of nonexistence—that must have been Kathulos himself! He would have just had time to strip, wrap himself in the linens and step into the case before we entered. You remember that the case, leaning upright against the wall, stood partly concealed by a large Burmese idol, which obstructed our view and doubtless gave him time to accomplish his purpose. My God, Costigan, with what horror of the prehistoric world are we dealing?"

"I have heard of Hindoo fakirs who could induce a condition closely resembling death," I began. "Is it not possible that Kathulos, a shrewd and crafty Oriental, could have placed himself in this state and his followers have placed the case in the ocean where it was sure to be found? And might not he have been in this shape tonight at Kamonos'?"

Gordon shook his head.

"No. I have seen these fakirs. None of them ever feigned death to the extent of becoming shriveled and hard—in a word, dried up. Morley, narrating in another place the description of the mummy-case as jotted down by Von Lorfmon and passed on to Schuyler, mentions the fact that large portions of seaweed adhered to it—seaweed of a kind found only at great depths, on the bottom of the ocean. The wood, too, was of a kind which Von Lorfmon failed to recognize or to classify, in spite of the fact that he was one of the greatest living authorities on flora. And his notes again and again emphasize the enormous *age* of the thing. He admitted that there was no way of telling how old the mummy was, but his hints intimate that he believed it to be, not thousands of years old, but millions of years!

"No. We must face the facts. Since you are positive that the picture of the mummy is the picture of Kathulos—and there is little room for fraud—one of two things is practically certain: the Scorpion was never dead but ages ago was placed in that mummy-case and his life preserved in some manner, or else—he was dead and has been brought to life! Either of these theories, viewed in the cold light of reason, is absolutely untenable. Are we all insane?"

"Had you ever walked the road to hashish land," I said somberly, "you could believe anything to be true. Had you ever gazed into the terrible reptilian eyes of Kathulos the sorcerer, you would not doubt that he was both dead and alive."

Gordon gazed out the window, his fine face haggard in the gray light which had begun to steal through them.

"At any rate," said he, "there are two places which I intend exploring thoroughly before the sun rises again—Kamonos' antique shop and Soho 48."

The gruesome and exciting denouement of the story will be told in the concluding chapters in next month's WEIRD TALES.

DEATH-GATE

By MONROE D. McGIBENY

Death is a gate all men must pass
Or soon or late, and none dare guess
What horrors wait beyond that gate,
Or what stars shine on what dread fate. . . .
If the countless feet of those within
Have rubbed Death's sill already thin,
To what vast depths it shall be worn
By the multitudes as yet unborn!
For some seek death and death seeks some,
But seeker and sought, they all must come
To that pale land whence none return.
Perhaps—through irony profound—
There is no gate, nor land beyond—
No moon that shines—no star that glows—
And nothing waits where no one goes. . . .

The Tailed Man of CORNWALL

by David H. Keller

"When I separated from him I had his tail in my hand."

FOR several days I was more than busy receiving the great men of Cornwall who thronged to my castle, driven by some mysterious urge, which no one fully comprehended but myself, to acknowledge me as their Overlord. The statements that they made to me concerning my fitness for this position were most flattering, and, at the same time, as I heard their petitions to have this and that giant killed and one enemy or another of the land driven out or destroyed, I felt that there was certainly a great

deal of work connected with the responsibility. Still, I told them, one and all, that, just as soon as I could, I would attend to all these minor adventures, because if I was going to be Overlord of a country, I wanted that land to be peaceful, quiet and safe. They were delighted with my promises, and departed, thoroughly convinced of my power to do all that would be asked of me. Of course, there was not much doubt in my mind as to my ability to perform any great act of chivalry that fell to my lot. I am sure that I was clever enough to conquer anything, even without help, but, of course, it was far more pleasant to know that I had the assistance of the Demon whom I had rescued from the glass bottle on the occasion of the Battle of the Toads.

Finally, but one of the great lords remained. He was a rather pleasing personality but of a dour humor, for during all the days that he had eaten my meat he had never smiled. He remained behind, and I suspected rightly that the reason for his doing so was a desire to talk over some matters with me which could not be discussed in the presence of the other knights. I heard, indirectly, that he had some ambitions to become Overlord of Cornwall himself; naturally, those ambitions were blighted by my very astonishing assumption of authority. I thought for a while that he might have a desire to slip a dagger into me, but found, in a short time, that I was completely misjudging the poor fellow. He was not worrying about his loss of power, but of something far more precious to him, the loss of his fair lady love.

The unhappy young man told me the sad tale the first evening we were alone. I had purposely taken him into my new library, as I found that he was fond of the finer things in life, and it was my belief that in the quiet peace of that room, in front of the fire, he would feel more confidential and less embarrassed in the telling of his story than he would otherwise. This was a correct supposition. In no time at all he unburdened himself and told me of his great sorrow.

"I am a man of Cornwall," he said. "My family have always lived in Cornwall. Perhaps I would have been wiser had I always remained here, but, like many young knights, I had to go adventuring. Fate took me to Ireland, and Boy Cupid introduced me to Queen Broda. When we met, doves flew over us and a sparrow lighted on her golden chariot. It was love at first sight, but the sad hap was that she did not know I was from Cornwall. She ruled mightily over a large part of the island, and there her word was law. She loved me, and the fact that I was poor made mighty little difference in the sweetness of her kisses. We were ready to marry, but when she found out that I was from Cornwall, she simply told me that she could never marry me. Then I came home and since then it has made little difference to me whether I was ever Overlord or whether I was even dead or alive. For, to live happy, I must have Broda for wife, and for her to be happy she must have me for her lover, and, yet, she says that it can never be, simply because I am a Cornishman."

" 'Tis a sad tale," I agreed, "and I suppose you want my help?"

"That is why I lingered."

"Did she give any reason for her cruel refusal of your love?"

"That in very truth she did. She says that I am from Cornwall and that all Cornishmen have tales of braggadocio and other tails, the very mention of which fills her with fear."

"You mean that she believed you to be a tailed man?"

"Yes. That is her belief.

"Of course, she must have had some reason for such an idea."

"Certainly."

"Naturally, we can not blame her for not marrying you, thinking as she did. It seems to me that under the

circumstances the lady showed rare judgment and a very fine discrimination. But why did you not show her that she was wrong?"

"I tried to in every way I could. I told her that I was as tailless as the Irish, but she simply cried and said that she could not trust me, and how would she feel after she was married to me and could not undo it, to find out that I had lied to her? I told her that I was a true man and spoke the truth, but she retorted that thus had all men spoken to women since the days of Knight Æneas and Lady Dido, and that none of them were to be trusted, especially one with a tail."

I sadly shook my head as I remarked, "Oh! These women! These women!"

"Have you ever been in love?" he asked dolefully.

"Not yet."

"Then you don't know half about them. But will you help me?"

"I certainly will do all I can. In fact, I think I will be sending for this mighty Queen and will be after explaining a few things to her. I can tell her positively that you have no tail?"

"That is something that you will have to decide for yourself," was all the satisfaction that Lord Fitz-Hugh would give me.

I shrugged my shoulders, as I cautioned him.

"I think you ought to be candid with me. I am Overlord now of what I hope will some day be a great realm. One of the foundations of that country will be honesty and fair dealings with our neighbors. Thus we may hope to escape devastating wars. Suppose, on my word of honor as a true King, I tell this lady that you have no tail, and on the strength of my say-so she marries you, and then suppose that she finds that I told her wrong. Think how she would feel! How would I feel if she cut off your head and tail and came to Cornwall to revenge herself on me? I have to know certainly about this. It is really very important."

"You will simply have to make up your mind—form your own opinion."

He was so stubborn that I saw there was nothing to be done about it; so I bade him go back to his castle, and said that when the time came I would send for him. In fact, I did more. Finding that he lived but a day's journey from my castle, I adventured thither with him the next day and spent a very pleasant time with him. He was living in the castle where he was born and where his family had lived for many generations. I met his mother, a very pleasant lady, who was quite witty, yet, at the same time, remarkably learned and greatly distressed over the unhappiness of her son. Then I left them, promising them that I would do what I could, as soon as I could, and then I was sure everything would turn out in a most happy manner to the great satisfaction of Lord Fitz-Hugh.

IT WAS a fortunate happening that I returned when I did. While the Lords and Knights of Cornwall were perfectly willing for me to be their Overlord, the men of Wales had some different ideas. In fact, they had a candidate of their own. They told me, through their ambassadors, that unless I left the country at once, they would secure the help of the Irish, especially of Queen Broda, who hated Cornwall more than she hated Hell, and they would come over my land and replace all the dead Cornwall men with first-class Welshmen.

I consulted with several of the gray-haired nobles in the vicinity. It seemed that if the Welshmen came by themselves, it would be an even fight, but if the Irish merged forces with either side, it would be hard to overcome them. They said that they would stand by me to the end, but that there was no doubt but that they were afraid of this Irish Queen. I remembered that the Demon had promised

that I was to be Overlord of Cornwall, but there was nothing said in our agreement as to how long I was to hold that position and retain the honor. I had a hard time enjoying the library that evening. Even the manuscript of *Elephantis* failed to thrill me, and I told myself that this matter of politics was a most unsatisfactory one and that just as soon as I could I was going to retire to a nice quiet place, like Avalon-by-the-sea.

The next day was stormy. So was the next day. And on the third day came frightened runners, who told that the Irish were marching through the land, and before I could decide how to act, a great army encamped around my castle, and there I was, with Queen Broda on one side of the castle wall and me on the other side, a most peculiar position for a real Overlord to be placed in.

There was nothing to do except to see what she wanted, so I readily gave willing assent to her request for an interview. She told me, over the drawbridge, through the mouth of a most interesting old herald, that if I doubted her word, I could be accompanied by several hundred of my men-at-arms, but that she preferred privacy and therefore asked that I meet her at sundown that night on the grassy green in front of the castle. I told the herald that I would be there, and that I would come alone, as the Queen requested.

I spent the afternoon in moody silence in the library, trying to decide what the lady wanted and what would satisfy her, but I finally gave it up as something that was hopeless, as there seemed to be no telling what she wanted, and, as far as I knew, no man had ever yet satisfied a woman; at least, he had never lived to boast of it. So I spent the rest of the time reading of the temptations of Saint Anthony, and a most weary time he had of it, what with the desert dust and the lovely women he did not yield to—at least, he boasted that he did not yield. Later in the afternoon I dressed in my best and at the appointed going-downward of the sun, I walked slowly out through the gate to the grassy place in front of the castle.

QUEEN BRODA sat silent in her golden chariot. She was rather easy to look at. I certainly could not blame young Fitz-Hugh for his infatuation. In fact, I even considered the possibility of explaining to her that I was from France and that things might come to a worse pass than uniting our forces and giving the Welsh a sound thrashing, followed at an appropriate moment by a marriage that would unite the two kingdoms of Ireland and Cornwall. But there was a determined glint in her eye and a pert way of holding her head that made me feel that it would be best for me if I could induce her to take Fitz-Hugh on faith—perhaps I could do more with some other woman than I could with her—mayhap Fitz-Hugh could handle her better and easier.

She did not wait for me to even introduce myself, but began, "Are you going to give me what I want?"

"Well, that depends. So far, I have not the least idea of what you are after. Now, if you want me to help you fight the Welsh, I think that we can come to an understanding——"

"Don't be silly! I just want one thing and that is the head of your Lord Fitz-Hugh."

I raised my eyebrows slightly.

"Why, Queen Broda! I am astonished. I thought that you and the young man were friendly. It would be too bad to deprive him of his head, and he young and wonderfully debonair. What can the poor fellow have done to have you treat him thus?"

"He courted me and then when I promised to marry him told me that he was of Cornwall."

"Well, what of it? He had to be from somewhere, did he not?"

"Now, listen to me, Cecil, son of James, son of John, you who hold your place as Overlord by some chicanery that has caused endless talk in this part of the world. In my country we have elephants, cametennus, metacollinarum, white and red lions, men with eyes before and behind. We have satyrs and pigmies and forty-ell giants, but we have no tailed men, and we are certainly not going to have any, certainly not as the husband of Queen Broda; so I came over for the head of this man who insulted me."

"Ireland," I replied, "must be a most interesting country. Have you ever heard of what we have here in Cornwall? Have travelers told you of our Cyclopses, fauns and centaurs, of our wild oxen, hyenas, and lamias; of our white merles, crickets, and men with eyes before and behind? Just as soon as I can I intend to destroy all these evil monsters, and I am really surprized, Queen Broda; in fact, I can not understand at all, at all, why it is that you have allowed your fair land to be overrun by such trash as you tell me of. Allow me to offer my services after I have cleaned Cornwall of its monstrosities. Did you know that I had magical powers? How surprized were Gog and Magog when I conquered them, and Agit and Agimandi were absolutely dumfounded when I bound them in chains and cast them into the Mare Nostrum. I have eaten of the plant Assidos, which protects the eater from evil spirits, and I wear on my body the stone Nudiosi, which prevents the sight from growing feeble and makes it possible for the wearer to see a great distance. For example, at this very moment I can see how this matter is all going to end."

I could see that she was impressed, for she replied, "Just from looking at you, Sir Cecil, one would not believe you had all these powers, and yet there must be something about you, because in no time at all you have established yourself here."

"Well, it is hard to tell about a man, just by looking at him. But tell me one thing: what put this idea into your head about Lord Fitz-Hugh's having a tail?"

"He is a man of Cornwall, and all of that land are thus tailed."

"Are you sure?"

"Certainly. You are not going to doubt my word, are you? The next thing you will be calling me a liar. It happened this way. A very learned man, Polydore Vergil, hath written the whole tale in his book. He tells how Saint Thomas à Becket came to Strood, one of your villages, which is situated on the Medway, the river that washes Rochester. The men of Cornwall living in that place, wishing to put a mark of contumely on the good Saint, did not scruple to cut the tail off the horse he was riding on, and, for this profane and inhospitable act, they covered themselves with eternal reproach, and since then all the men of Cornwall have been born with tails on them, and no man like that shall ever sit by my side and rule Ireland, and the only way I can ease my pride is to take his head back with me" — here the poor lady began to cry—"and he should have thought of that and how it would make me feel, before he made me love him so. And how would it be for me to be the mother of a poor little Princess with a tail on her like an ape or a monkey?"

"That would not do at all," I replied in my most soothing way, and when I try to soothe the ladies, I usually succeed. I remember very well how I completely changed the desire of a lady in Araby once, for she was first minded to kill me, but, by my power and a certain talisman that I carried, I compelled her to other ideas. So, I soothingly said:

"That would not do at all. But how would it be, if by my power I removed this tail? Suppose I made Lord Fitz-Hugh like other men? How then? Would you still demand his head?"

"Don't be silly," she replied archly. "Of course, I would rather marry him than kill him, but I never thought that anything like that could be done—you mean without a scar? And if there was a little baby, she would be all right? Just like any other little baby?"

"If I promise you that everything will be all right, everything will be all right. All you have to do is to trust me. Of course, it would take some powerful magic. I will at once begin my sorcery by the use of rabdomancy; later on I may have to use the blood of a newborn child, but I should rather not do that unless it is necessary. Suppose we have Lord Fitz-Hugh come over here? You will promise him safe conduct, I know. Then the three of us could go down into my special cavern, far in the bowels of the earth, under my castle, and there I could do what is necessary to this man of Cornwall and make him closer to your heart's desire."

"You promise me that it won't hurt him much?"

"Not as much as cutting off his head. Of course, he may moan a little, but he is quite a brave man, and I am sure that he can stand it. Suppose you send most of your army back and come into the castle as my guest. I can take care of about fifty of your men. Then we will send at once for this tailed man and start to work. I suppose you are anxious to go back to Ireland? But I want you to promise me one thing: If I do this feat of magic for you and restore your lover to you, built as all other men, no fear of hereditary taint, you will tell those men of Wales to leave Cornwall alone or settle with me. Will you promise?"

She promised; so I left her with the understanding that she and fifty of her men would become my guests on the morrow and the rest of the wild Irish were to go back to their island. And I walked back to the castle.

Queen Broda sat silent in her golden chariot, but there was a look of happiness and hope on her lovely face.

THE next day Lord Fitz-Hugh came. He was just as dismal as ever.

"I have to remove either your head or your tail," I told him, "or this wild Irish lassie of yours is going to let the Welshmen cut our throats and wash Cornwall in blood. So, off comes your tail."

"No one can take my tail off," he answered, surly and sad.

"And why not?"

"You know why," was all he could say.

Certainly in that mood he was no fit playmate for a girl like Queen Broda. I saw that I would have to be rather clever or they never would marry, tail or no tail, and there they were, madly in love and grieving themselves sick over the matter.

That night the three of us met in a cell, far down under the castle. It was a very unpleasant place, but it was the best I could do in a hurry. I had sent down some rattling chains and a brazier of charcoal and some incense, which made a terrible smell, and I had a hound dog tied in one corner and seven rats in a wire cage hanging from the wall; so it all looked horrible enough, and even my blood chilled when the hound howled, which he did every time that he looked up at the rats. I had a stool for the lady to sit on, but Fitz-Hugh and I stood up. I began with the Lord's Prayer in Latin said backward, a trick I had learned in my boyhood. And then I threw a dead mouse on the burning charcoal and closed my eyes and just muttered, and then with a howl that startled them all, even the dog, I jumped on poor Fitz-Hugh and wrestled with him, and when I separated from him, I had his tail in my hand, and, after showing it to the Queen, I shakingly put it on the charcoal and it gave off a mighty offensive smell as it burned.

There was no doubt left in the mind of Queen Broda. The man of Cornwall had had a tail; by my magic I had taken the tail from him; and now he had the tail no more and she could marry him. She did not waste any time, but took the poor lad in her arms and kissed him till I tired of the counting, and he kissed her and I saw that I was not wanted; so I suggested that we return to the library and I would leave them there to talk matters over and arrange for their future.

In the library they were most grateful. The Queen told me that I need never worry about those men of Wales, for she was going to attend to them personally, just as soon as the honeymoon was over. Gladly Fitz-Hugh told me he was going to send me a gold chain and some books he had that I wanted. So everything was lovely, and that very night they were married by my priest.

The next morning they left me. I went down the road a piece with them. Of course, Lord Fitz-Hugh was riding with Queen Broda in her golden chariot, and she was silent, but her eyes and dimpled cheeks did a lot of talking. He stepped out of the chariot and came over to my horse when he said good-bye to me. He looked at me earnestly.

"Cecil, son of James, son of John, son of even Saint Christopher," he said, "how did you know I did not have a tail?"

I laughed. "That was not hard to find out, Fitz-Hugh. When I had the opportunity, I asked your mother."

We looked over at the young bride.

Queen Broda sat silently in her golden chariot. She was smiling.

A further adventure of the Overlord of Cornwall will appear in WEIRD TALES next month.

A Short Tale of Black Magic

Scarlatti's Bottle

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

THE day was hot. The troops of the Gonzaga were encamped before the city of Mantua. Some distance away the armies of the Orsini and Colonna were stationed, and far away could be seen the flying banners of the Bull, the victorious Borgia. Dark, ominous clouds brooded low on the horizon.

The soldiers stood about in little groups. In one of these groups a young man interrupted the discussion of the Borgia maneuvers by a sudden, abrupt change of subject.

"It is rumored among the troops that the young Duke Gonzaga has incurred the displeasure of Messer Scarlatti, the magician."

"Of Mantua?"

"Of Mantua." He nodded. "Have you heard of such rumors?"

"Yes," said one of them suddenly. "It is said that Messer Scarlatti has presented the duke with a magic bottle in token of his forgiveness."

A few of the soldiers raised their eyebrows questioningly; one smiled, with cheeks drawn inward.

"I doubt Scarlatti's good-will. Scarlatti has never yet forgiven an insult such as the Duke Gonzaga imposed upon him."

"Yet the duke had grounds for insulting him."

"How is that so?"

The first soldier shrugged his shoulders eloquently. "Messer Scarlatti ridiculed Messer Mantegna's mural of the family group in the bridal chamber of their Mantuan castle."

"Others have done so."

"And some have lost their heads in consequence."

Someone laughed suddenly. "Scarlatti is a wily devil. You know, there is a condition attached to this bottle."

"A condition?" The soldiers leaned eagerly toward the speaker.

"Yes. Messer the Duke Gonzaga is never to open the bottle. It is rather a futile condition, I believe. For in the bottle can be seen a small piece of paper, folded carefully, so as to show a bit of writing here and there."

"You think the duke will open it?"

"Without a doubt."

"Were I he, I should heed Scarlatti's warnings carefully."

"But you are not he."

"Quiet. Here he comes."

Messer the Duke Gonzaga rode slowly past his officers. The wind caught his thin beard and blew it skyward. The long plume on his cap partly obscured his features. From his belt hung a small bottle, lightly colored pink.

"That is the bottle," said someone in a whisper, so that the duke partly turned and regarded them.

"I doubt whether it has value."

"Messer Scarlatti said nothing of its quality; he warned that all its power would be lost if the bottle were opened."

"We shall see. The duke will never keep his hands from the bottle."

The Duke Gonzaga rode slowly through his father's camp. He came at last to his father's tent, which he entered as was his custom. His father, a heavily built man, rose to a sitting posture when his eldest son entered the tent.

"You wear the bottle still, Arturo?"

"Why not? It can not harm me."

"I can not bring myself to trust Scarlatti, for all that I know of him. You shall see, my son; no good can come of it."

"And why, pray tell me?" The young duke drew off his gauntlets and stood looking down at his father.

"Arturo," the older man admonished, "you do not know Scarlatti as I do."

"If he is then such a dangerous man, why have you not had him imprisoned and sentenced?"

"One can not always do as one wishes with a magician. I once had him imprisoned, but the following day he met me on the street. He greeted me and made a joke of the imprisonment. He said that the next time I would not even take him. It was true; though I tried again and again, I could not take him. He disappeared in most mysterious manners; so that at last my soldiers hesitated about obeying my orders. I had, at length, to conciliate him with gifts most costly."

"I should say that he jested with you, Father."

"It is characteristic of the young to be skeptical. However, it is my wish that you shall see for yourself before it is too late."

"If it is your wish that I remove the bottle, you have but to order it removed."

"I wish it removed, certainly, but I shall not order it done, for, unless you obey the wizard implicitly, you shall sorrow for leaving the bottle."

"But why have you prejudice against the bottle?"

"I think it bewitched, Arturo."

"That does not strike me true."

"I have but to say again," said the elder in resignation, "that you do not know Messer Scarlatti."

A light dinner was served the two. After the repast, the young duke rode from the camp in the direction of the city of Mantua, whither he was bent on an amorous adventure. His lackey accompanied him the greater part of the distance, which was not far, but at the city gates the Duke Gonzaga dismissed him, bidding him wait until his return. The lackey accordingly posted himself, watching his master enter the city with an uneasy mind.

The moon had already disappeared behind the western horizon when the Duke Gonzaga reappeared at the city gates. He had left the chamber of his mistress at the hour, three glasses of sand after the midnight. For some distance he rode in silence, the bottle at his belt making an unpleasant jangling noise against the trappings of his horse. The lackey rode sleepily at his side.

Suddenly the duke drew rein. The lackey did likewise. He observed out of a half-opened eye that his master had been drinking heavily. The duke began to finger the bottle meditatively, mumbling to himself the while. The frightened lackey caught a curse on Messer Scarlatti, at which he crossed himself, expecting at any moment to see that person come down upon the duke in a shape horrible beyond words. However, nothing happened.

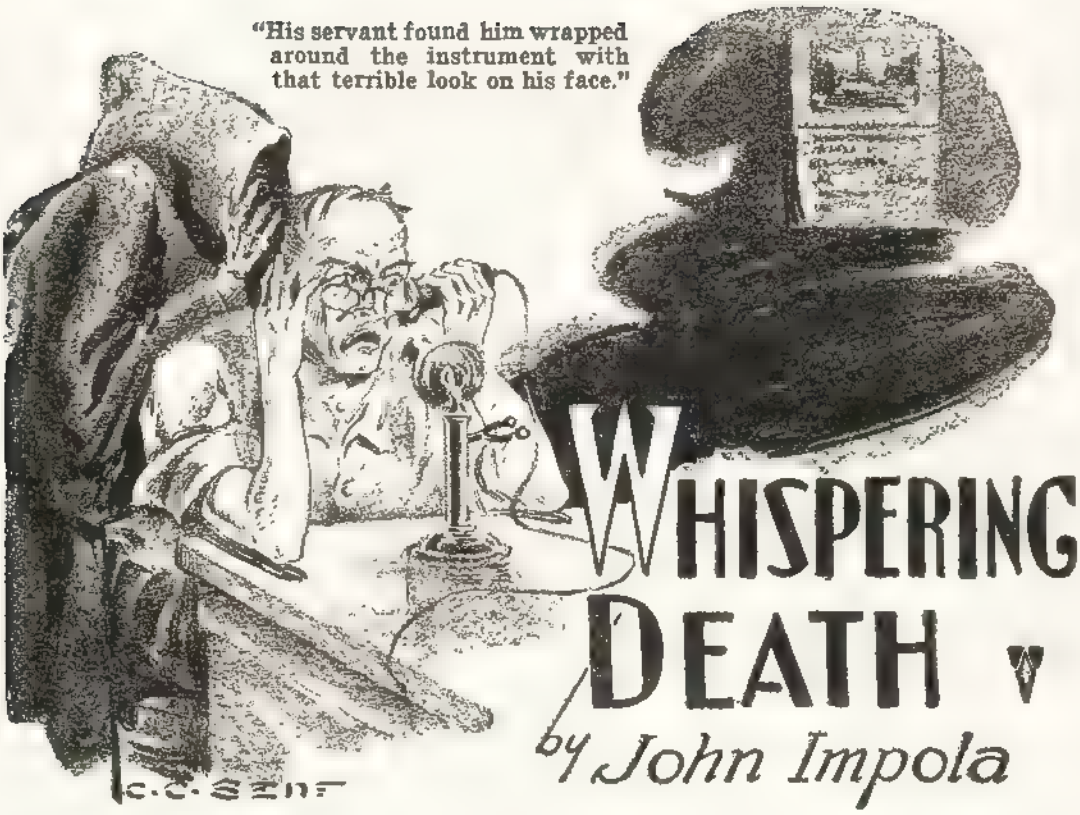
The duke again urged his horse forward. But he stopped again. This time he held the bottle up against the sky and shook it vehemently. He half raised his rapier to strike the neck from the bottle, but thinking better of it, lowered it again. He shook the bottle until the paper moved so swiftly that it could hardly be seen. The lackey at last begged him to desist, vowing that evil would come upon him. The duke, his senses heavy with wine, struck at the servant, and sent him from him. The lackey retired at some distance to watch the procedure of his master, for he knew that the old duke would hold him responsible in a measure for his son's good.

Just within the lines of the camp the duke fought off his fear and struck the neck from the bottle. He reached in to get the paper, but he never took hold of it. Suddenly he felt someone at his neck. He fell from his horse, struggling furiously. His lackey came up at breathless speed. When he reached the body of the young duke, now prone upon the ground, but still feebly struggling, there was no one else in sight. Yet the duke struggled! The lackey held his lantern close to the agonized face of his master. Close by lay the note that had fallen from the bottle.

He stood helplessly by while his master died. After a moment great livid marks appeared on the neck of the dead duke. The lackey, frightened out of his wits, stood for a space undecided. At last he seized the note and ran with it to the old duke. He told him all that occurred, while the Duke Gonzaga read:

I feared you would not like my bottle imp, Highness, Duke Gonzaga; so I cautioned you accordingly.

SCARLATTI.



"His servant found him wrapped around the instrument with that terrible look on his face."

WHISPERING DEATH

by John Impola

COLD sweat broke out on the brow of the city editor of the *Seattle Evening Herald* as he stared at the notice which he had just picked out of the copy basket on his desk. It read:

WHISPERING DEATH desires that the *Herald* cease all mention of his activities. You know what it means to disobey!

Instead of a signature a red zigzag line crossed the bottom of the sheet.

Paul Whitrock knew. Three times within the past week men had been found dead, horror written indelibly on their faces, hands clapped over their ears as if to ward off some hideous sound, bodies that had stiffened in their writhing. And this same death faced him, if he chose to continue to devote the headlines to the Whispering Death's murders.

Whitrock realized that the unceasing publicity which had been given these murders had been annoying the Death, and that this politely worded note was his way of ending the annoyance. No doubt, he reasoned, the other papers of the city would receive similar notices.

Not a single clue had been unearthed by frantic police officials, not a trace which might lead to the capture of the criminal who threatened the lives of any within his reach. A wave of terror, nationwide in its extent, seemed imminent.

The telephone bell jangled near the desk, rudely jerking the editor out of the revery into which he had fallen. Almost automatically he reached for the instrument, picked up the receiver, and said "city desk" into the transmitter.

The semi-hysterical voice of Chet Mason, city editor of the *Morning Tribune*, came over the wire. "Say, Paul," it quavered, "have you seen the gag notice sent out by the Death? I just got it in with my copy, although heaven knows how it got there."

Whitrock tried to sympathize, but the other editor rushed right on. "And he says if we don't shut up he'll turn that sound loose in this office!" Mason's voice ended in an upward wail.

So he had been right about the Death's warnings to the other papers. He started to reassure the *Tribune* editor without feeling a whit of self-assurance himself, but again Mason interrupted.

"But Paul," he quavered, "what are we going to do? If we don't print the news we get fired, and if we do we get killed."

Whitrock said nothing, and his opinion of Mason, never exceptionally high, sank still lower. Mason, he decided, was a baby, to be thus frightened by a threat. But 'way down in his heart, he admitted to himself that he "wasn't so darned sure he wasn't scared too." He hung up.

The door of the editorial rooms banged open and Tom Tennant, chief of detectives, rushed in. He was a large man, and towered over the editor as he unburdened his thoughts in as short a time as possible.

"What's this Mason told me—that the Death is trying to gag the press? I came over here rather than to the *Tribune* office, because Mason is crying out loud, scared to death. What's the dope?"

Whitrock's gray eyes appraised the detective, mutely wondering whether it was safe to tell all he knew. He decided it was, although sometimes, for the interests of his paper, he retained information from the detective. Finally he spoke.

"Yes, it's all straight enough," he said. "But just a minute, until I give the story to a reporter, and then I'll tell you what I know."

He turned and spoke to one of the men in the office. "Here's a note which the Whispering Death left in the copy basket a little while ago. Write it up for the home edition, will you?"

The reporter nodded and turned away.

"Oh, Ted!" Whitrock had an afterthought. The reporter turned. "If you don't want to write that story, I'll do it myself."

The reporter grinned and sat down at his typewriter, as though in derision of the Death and his threat.

TENNANT waited patiently for ten minutes while the editor cleared up the copy for the next edition. He was accustomed to Whitrock's habits, and knew that to interrupt him when he was working was not liked.

Finally the editor sent the copy boy scampering off with the last of the copy and turned to the detective. "Yes, Chet called up just before you came and nearly flooded me with tears over the phone. He's all worried about being killed." He grinned.

"So am I," laughed the detective, "but I'm not broadcasting it to all the world." Then he became serious. "Well, what did he say to you?"

"He said 'Shut up'."

"Just that?"

"Words to that effect. And he added that we know what to expect if we don't obey. Well, we know!" Whitrock was grim, and his square chin set itself as for a physical encounter. "Any new cases?" he asked.

"Yeh! You know old Kinkaid, the old tightwad who hates everyone, including himself? Well, the Death got him last night."

"Old Kinkaid?" Whitrock was incredulous. "Why did the Death pick on him? Why, he was so mean it was a kindness to kill him."

"I know it," returned the other. "But listen! Guess how it was done."

"Don't know. In the usual way, I suppose."

"No, by telephone! His servant found him all wrapped around the instrument, with that terrible look on his face, *hands tight over his ears.* He had a devil of a time to get the *receiver out of the old man's hand.*"

"But Tom," snapped the newspaperman, "he can control the city in a day by using the telephone."

"Don't I know it! But Paul, I think I've got a solution. You said once that you knew a professor up at the university who was a wizard on sound."

"Sure—old Professor Lathrop, in the physics department."

"Maybe you could get him to arrange a wave trap or some sort of attachment which would make these phones safe. It's a cinch we need something like that!"

"That's a good idea, Tom!" Whitrock was enthusiastic. "I'll drop in on him as soon as I go off duty. I live out that way, you know."

"Good!" Tennant glanced at his watch. "Wow! I've got to go. You see this prof and I'll drop around in the morning and hear what he has to say."

He turned at the door. "Oh, say," he said, "don't say anything about old Kinkaid yet. I want to work in peace for today."

"All right," agreed the editor, "but give us the break when you're ready."

"Sure!" said Tennant, and swung out the door.

PAUL WHITROCK was busy—watching a girl. Not that he did this habitually, for he had scarcely known anyone of the opposite sex, except in his work, since he had been graduated from college six years before. And now, at twenty-seven, he caught himself looking at a girl. He was puzzled, and a little ashamed of himself, but he watched the dainty movements of the girl just the same. And he had a queer little feeling of elation as he did it.

Her name was Murvia Murray—at least that was what Professor Lathrop had called her when he introduced his assistant to the newspaperman. "Murvia." He liked the name. And her hair was golden, and her throat was so white behind the jet black of the beads she wore . . .

"——and so," rambled the professor, his attitude reminiscent, "I gave fifteen failures in that class that year——"

Paul was annoyed. Confound old Lathrop anyway! He seemed so irrelevant alongside the—well, the slim white fingers and the twirl of a pleated skirt as the girl moved here and there in filing away examination papers. Once she stopped, and glanced in his direction. He got a glimpse of blue — intensely blue — eyes, and he immediately wanted to see them again.

"——and do you remember what grade I gave you that quarter, Paul?" the professor continued. Paul was deep in a problem, wondering if that dimple always appeared when she smiled. Then it came dimly to his consciousness that Lathrop had asked a question.

"Yes, I'm quite sure of it," he said vaguely. The professor continued his discourse, plunging into new fields, and neither he nor the newspaperman realized the incongruity of the answer.

Whitrock wondered if she liked canoeing, horseback riding, camping, and it tickled him to think that she probably would. And he liked the way her hair was bobbed in back, so that when she turned her head quickly it rose up and then settled easily back into place.

"——and so," dragged on the professor, "I almost invented this Whispering Death sound myself." Paul felt exasperated, but wait—what was it that Lathrop had said: that he had nearly invented the sound himself? He faced the professor sharply.

"Do you mean to say that you've been trying to invent that heathenish sound yourself?" he asked vehemently.

"Surely." Lathrop stretched himself in his chair. "You see, Paul, if that sound were put to proper use by

any government as powerful as ours, it would be the means of effecting world peace."

"How?" The newspaperman was interested, but doubtful.

"Well, given a nation that would not try to dominate the world with it, then such a nation could force the others into peace. Now do you see why I've striven to develop the idea?"

Whitrock had an inspiration. "Say," he said suddenly, "if you know so much about the death sound, maybe you know how to prevent its use."

The professor shook his head. "No, I don't," he said slowly, "since it penetrates through almost any kind of protection which the ears can be given. That's one of its chief values: there is no available defense. But if you care to listen I can give you an idea how it developed, and maybe you can better understand what the Death is. You are familiar enough with radios to know the squealing sound produced by certain ways of tuning?"

Whitrock nodded.

"And you know that by tuning this way the sound can be made higher and higher until you cease to hear it? Well, that sound doesn't stop simply because you can't hear it. The average human ear can handle up to 30,000 vibrations per second.

"Several years ago," he continued, "some German scientists discovered that by producing these sound waves to the frequency of from 100,000 to 110,000 per second, they could kill fish and rodents with the sound. Then they calculated that if they could increase this frequency to about 200,000, they could destroy human life with the sound.

"I began work at once, and without difficulty produced the frequency necessary to destroy life in the rats and fish, but when it came to producing sounds of higher frequency I was blocked. And there I was when this criminal began his work."

Whitrock was disturbed. Somehow he didn't like the tone of the professor's voice; it seemed as though Lathrop was secretly laughing at him, that he was no longer the same lighthearted, sincere old Lathrop he had known in college. He downed the thought, but it troubled him nevertheless.

Suddenly he remembered his mission to Lathrop's office, and asked, "Suppose that this sound could be transmitted over the telephone; would there be any way of stopping it?"

Lathrop shook his head. "No, because all the diaphragms in existing phones are sensitive enough to respond to the sound. But I really doubt that the Whispering Death will try that. Phone calls are too easy to trace."

Paul started to tell the professor what had already happened, but the suspicion or unnamed doubt of a moment before made him pause. He decided to say nothing, since Lathrop had already given him the information he wanted. But he didn't like that leering look in the professor's eyes at all. He looked at his watch, and rose to go.

"Well, Paul," Lathrop said, "if there is anything I can do to assist in getting the Whispering Death, just call on me at any time." And again Paul had the impression that he was the object of the professor's silent laughter.

HE TURNED into the hallway, and nearly collided with the girl, Lathrop's assistant, emerging from another door, which, Paul knew, led into the assistant's room. She smiled as he came forward, hat in hand.

"Leaving so soon?" she asked. The dimple mocked him, but he liked it. "Ordinarily when Professor Lathrop gets a friend in there he keeps him until morning."

Paul grinned. "He couldn't have kept me with a gun. I've got much work to do tomorrow."

They walked down the hall and left the building by a side door. She turned to a walk which led to the street-car line.

"Please," there was entreaty in his voice, "won't you let me take you home in my car? It's right here."

She dimpled adorably, and mischievously. "Ordinarily I don't accept rides from strange men," she protested.

"We've been introduced, haven't we?"

"Yes, but that doesn't mean I know you very well."

"Well," and he was parrying her thrust, "I don't know you very well either, so we're both of us taking a chance."

She laughed merrily, and proceeded with him to his coupé. He helped her in, tucked a robe about her, and took the wheel. She appraised him gravely while he started the motor and swung away from the curb, then lowered her eyes as he turned to her.

"Are you in any particular hurry to go home?" he queried.

"No. Why?"

"Because I think we might enjoy Lakeside Boulevard tonight. Want to?"

"I'd love to——" She snuggled down comfortably in her corner of the seat.

He drove rapidly across the campus and swung on to the boulevard that skirted the lake. Then he drove more slowly, and half turned so that he could see her face. She had laid her books on the far side, and so now she was close to him.

"I was surprized when I found out tonight that Lathrop had a girl for his assistant. He usually chooses men, doesn't he?" Then he kicked himself mentally for being personal. But to his relief, she appeared not to notice it.

"Yes, he does," she said, "but I became interested in this high frequency sound of his when I was a senior last year, and so he arranged that I win the fellowship in this department. But he maintains that I have become quite valuable to him."

"I can see an excellent reason for that," said Paul. She chose not to recognize the compliment.

"But now I suppose he'll choose someone else for next year, because this Whispering Death discovered the sound before he did, and he seems to be doing everything he can to forget that he had anything to do with it."

Whitrock started at her direct mention of the Death. Somehow that had been so remote from his thoughts since he had left the campus.

"But why were you interested in the sound?" he asked.

"Mostly to get the fellowship, at first." She smiled wistfully. "You see, Father met some reverses, and that meant no more school for me unless I did something. So I did this. But I'm really interested now, and I regret that Professor Lathrop has given up interest in the sound."

"He seemed very much interested when he talked about it to me," said Whitrock.

"I'm afraid he did that for your special benefit, then," she said. "But the work that has been done on the sound in that laboratory in the past three weeks I've done myself."

"You!" Paul was amazed.

"Yes. You see, I've decided that if I can discover it myself I can work out the way to prevent it; that is, so that I may protect all these people from getting murdered by the Death."

"You're working on it now?"

"Yes, but I haven't dared tell him about it because he has been very irritable lately, and speaks to me in dreadful language. I suppose, though, I'll have to stand it, at least until June, when I get my master's degree."

The car came to an upward grade, and Paul leaned forward to shift gears. In doing so, he touched her hand, felt for an instant the velvety smoothness of the skin, and then, almost shamefacedly, shifted to the lower gear and sat upright.

He picked up the thread of their conversation awkwardly. "Then you know quite a bit about the sound yourself?"

She smiled. "I wouldn't care to boast about it, but I think I know as much about it as he does, plus what I've learned in these last three weeks myself."

"What is that?"

"I found some apparatus which he had constructed, and I put it together again. If the experiment works, as I think it will, I'll have discovered the sound myself!"

Whitrock gasped. The idea that this chit of a girl could be so close to discovering what the old master of physics had failed to find seemed impossible.

"You're sure?" he asked incredulously.

"I will be tomorrow afternoon. I'm going to try it on a rabbit, and if he dies, then I will have discovered the secret of the Whispering Death." She hung her head for a moment, and Paul thought he heard her sigh.

"You seem sad about it," he ventured.

"Not about discovering the sound, but—well, the rabbit is a special pet of mine, and it's hard to sacrifice him, and—really, I—I can't even afford to get guinea-pigs, and they're what I really need for the experiment."

Paul wondered what he should do under the circumstances; then the solution struck him. "Please," he said, "mightn't I help? Can't you let me bring the pigs and come over to watch the experiment?" He was eager. "I'm awfully interested."

She pondered the question a moment, then nodded. "I suppose I shouldn't, but I'd do anything to save my bunny." She smiled her gratitude. Then, "My, but it must be late! I didn't realize how time must have passed. What time is it?"

Whitrock glanced at his watch. "Not quite one o'clock," he said hopefully.

"I must go home. Mother won't be worried, because I often work late, but I've got to be rested for tomorrow, when the experiment takes place."

He agreed, and swung the car around toward a street leading into the section of the city from which they had come.

A few minutes' drive brought them to her home, a quiet cottage-like structure on a little side street. He helped her from the car, and escorted her to the door. She fitted the key to the lock; then, instead of turning it and opening the door, she turned to him.

"Thank you so much for the drive and for volunteering the guinea-pigs. The drive helped a lot, because I didn't know until this afternoon that I had even a chance to discover the sound, and I was pretty much excited when I met you in the hall."

"And then I'm coming out to the campus tomorrow afternoon?" Paul reassured himself.

"Yes," she said, "at three, in my room, the one from which you saw me come out tonight."

He nodded. Then she turned to go in, had a thought, and turned again to him.

"Please, I wasn't eavesdropping, but I heard Professor Lathrop say that telephones couldn't be protected against the death sound. He must not have been thinking, because a thick diaphragm in the receiver wouldn't respond to the rapid vibrations and would make the sound ineffective."

"By Jove, you're right! I'll call the telephone company in the morning and have the diaphragms installed

at once. You see, there has already been one case of telephone killing."

"Not really!" She was aghast. "Then it's all the more important that you do it."

He pursued the thought. "Why?" he asked.

"Because," she said softly, as she stood just within the door, her face shining in the half-light of the street lamp, "because I don't want anything like that to interfere with your coming out to the campus tomorrow, Paul."

WHITROCK was up to his ears in work the next morning when Tennant strode in, bristling with news. Again he waited until the editor had finished the rush news, and then broke out:

"The Death got another one last night. Got a man down in the slums, broke, ragged, and wretched. That's the fourth or fifth time he's killed someone who was of no possible harm to anyone except himself. Confound it, it begins to look as though this Whispering Death were trying to kill off all the miserable people in Seattle. Most of his victims are miserable either because they are extremely rich or extremely poverty-stricken."

The detective stopped from lack of breath, and the editor inserted a question. "Then you've found no motive in the Kinkaid case?" Somehow Whitrock felt that Tennant was being left behind in the chase for the Whispering Death. What Murvia had told him the night before seemed of supreme importance.

He paused abruptly in his thoughts. Murvia. What right had he to call her that, even in his thoughts? Well, after all, hadn't she called him Paul?

Tennant was rambling on with the details of the Kinkaid case.

"——and no possible motive; that is, a reasonable one. All his affairs were straight to a dot, nothing missing and nobody, so far as I know, wanted to kill him. Why the Death mixed into it is more than I can understand."

Whitrock broke in. "Are you ready to release the news about Kinkaid?"

"Oh, sure! Go ahead when you're ready. I can't find out anything about it, and the public may as well have the news." Paul made a notation on his story sheet, then spoke again:

"I found a way to prevent the Death's using the telephone. The telephone company just supplied me with a heavier diaphragm for my receiver here." He unscrewed the receiver and showed the disk to the detective.

The other nodded. "I'll get some, too," he said.

Whitrock evaded the detective's next question regarding what he had found out about the death sound. "Old Lathrop said that nothing could be done—that the sound penetrates almost any kind of protection. And he explained to me what the sound was. He knows all about it, because he tried to invent it himself."

The telephone bell rang imperiously. Whitrock answered it, to hear a steely voice come over the wire:

"Is that you, Whitrock?"

"Yes." Paul was puzzled.

"Hear this!" A deep rumbling sound came to the editor's ear. A peculiar vibrant quality in it made the sound almost pleasant, like an opiate to the nerves—soothing, thrilling, compelling the hearer to continue listening. In response to the feeling, Paul unconsciously pressed the receiver closer and closer to his ear. Then through the sound came the same steel-cold voice:

"This is the Whispering Death! It holds you! You can't get away! Feel it? Feel it? The higher the sound the closer you are to death! You have disobeyed and this is the penalty!"

The sound grew shriller and shriller; it began to pain the editor's ears, but he pressed the receiver tighter to his ear. He stiffened in his chair, his face twisted and writhed torturously, his arm began to encircle his head—to protect his ears——

Tennant, who had been looking elsewhere, whirled about and took in the situation at a glance. A single bound carried him to the editor's side; he jerked the telephone away from Whitrock, jerked the cord in two, and threw the instrument far across the room, virtually tearing the receiver from the ear of the editor. Whitrock fell forward to the floor, unconscious.

Tennant reached the water cooler with a bound, picked it up, and, returning, emptied its contents on the editor. Whitrock gasped, rose to his knees, but would have fallen again had not one of the reporters caught him as he went down. . . .

When Whitrock recovered consciousness he was lying, fully dressed, on the bed in his apartment. Tennant was standing anxiously near the bed, watching for the first sign of returning intelligence on Whitrock's face. He sighed with relief when the newspaperman opened his eyes.

"Gosh, Paul! I thought you had gone under, but that new diaphragm in the receiver saved you. The phone operator heard the sound, too, but she died. We don't know whether she was listening in, or whether the sound just carried over on the switchboard. Man! You don't know how lucky you are."

Paul looked around the apartment, still dazed. In a sort of detached manner he realized that he had heard the Whispering Death and that he had survived it. His thoughts were clearing up too slowly to satisfy him. Suddenly he sat up.

"What time is it?" he snapped.

"Oh, about two o'clock," answered the detective, leisurely.

"I'm going out," declared the editor as he started toward the door. "Where's my car?"

"It's outside, but you're not going anywhere in it." The detective looked adamant.

"But I've got a date!"

"I don't care what you've got, you're not going out!"

"Oh, all right." Paul sat down in an easy chair. "I guess you're—right—I feel a little dizzy." He teetered in his chair. Tennant propped him up, and ran into the kitchenette to get some water.

As soon as Tennant was out of sight, the editor walked quietly to the door and slipped out. He ran down the hall to the door, spotted his car in front of the building, and, reaching it in a few leaps, got his emergency keys from the lining of the roof of the car.

The coupé started with a jerk, just as Tennant dashed wildly out of the door, intent on stopping the editor. Whitrock paid no attention, but, disregarding speed laws, drove rapidly to an address at which, he had ascertained in the morning, he could obtain the guinea-pigs.

It was a matter of moments until Paul was speeding back to the city again, headed for the campus. He drew up behind the physics building just as the three o'clock bell was ringing, ending the previous hour's classes. Students, hurrying home from their classes, stared curiously at the young man who, bearing a large box under his arm, ran down the hall to the sound department.

Murvia smiled at him as she opened the door in response to his knock, but he saw the seriousness which she felt under the smile. "H'lo," she said. "You're just in time. I've got it all ready to try the experiment."

Murvia had given her hand to him when he entered, and he suddenly became conscious that he was still holding it, and that his grip on it

was not gentle. He glanced at her, but her eyes were lowered. Then she extracted her fingers from his grip slowly, and turned to the apparatus.

It consisted of a remade radio cabinet, with the top opened and laid back. Paul got an impression of a great number of cogs, gears and wheels. Attached to the table was a large crank, which turned a sprocket wheel on the cabinet.

She turned her attention to the box which he had brought, and exclaimed, "Oh, you brought two of them! I'm so glad, because it makes the experiment so much more certain." He placed one of the tiny animals in the sound-proof box which adjoined the radio cabinet, and, acting under instructions from Murvia, closed the cover and sealed it air-tight.

"You see," she said, "there's air enough in there for him to live until after we've admitted the sound into the chamber, and if the experiment works he won't suffer anyway. Besides, we must protect ourselves against the sound." Paul remembered his experience of the morning, but decided to tell her nothing about it yet.

She explained about the crank. "Professor Lathrop has a large electric motor which would have turned the machine very well, and I know he isn't using it just now. But this morning when I asked for it, he was very angry and swore at me, and then when I started to go into his laboratory, he chased me out of the office. So I suppose I'll have to ask you to turn the crank." She was apologetic.

"I'll do it gladly," he said, and grasped the crank. "All ready?"

"Whenever you are." Her eyes were shining with excitement, but she displayed no signs of nervousness.

Whitrock began to turn the crank, slowly, because he found it heavy. Evidently he was setting in motion a heavy flywheel of some kind, necessary to attain a high speed to create the lethal sounds. Under his efforts, the machine turned faster and faster.

A dull roar came through the thicknesses of the box, and Paul recognized with a start the same silky smoothness, the irresistibility, of the sound which he heard in the morning. But as the sound gradually became higher and higher, it faded away until the only evidence of the creation of the Whispering Death sound was Paul's efforts and a sort of slithering whisper, coming very faintly to their ears.

Murvia raised her hand, and the newspaperman stopped turning, but the momentum of the machine carried the crank around and around with it, gradually slowing down.

The dull roar came back into evidence, getting lower and lower. Finally the crank turned no more, and Murvia signaled to Paul to open the sound chamber. "I can't," she explained simply.

He loosened the thumb-screws which held the cover down, turned it up, and looked inside. The animal was quite dead, all tied up in a grotesque knot on the bottom of the chamber. It resembled the human bodies left by the Whispering Death, for its tiny paws were holding the pointed ears down, warding off the sound.

He turned to the girl, but she had already seen what the results had been. The thrill of success shone in her eyes, and she smiled faintly. "It—it's worked, Paul," she said.

"Murvia!" The name came from him almost naturally, and she smiled at its use. "Murvia! It's a success, and you've won the first step to saving the country from the threat of the Whispering Death!"

"I know it, and I think I'm the happiest person alive for that reason," she whispered. She raised her frank blue eyes to his, and he dwelt

in their glory. Surely, he thought, blue eyes like that had never existed before.

"Shall we make sure with the other animal?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes, but I'll get Professor Lathrop to watch it. I'm sure he'll be pleased. She turned to the door to the laboratory, and, finding it locked, ran into the professor's office, Whitrock following close behind. She tried that door to the laboratory, and it swung open. She loked inside, and started back.

SEATED at his desk was the aged professor, and on that desk was practically the duplicate of the apparatus with which Murvia had a moment before discovered the death sound. When she opened the door, he was busy placing a telephone into the sound chamber of the apparatus, a cynical smile curling his lips into an evil grimace.

He looked up to see Murvia standing amazed at the door, and a look of a cornered beast came to his features, twisting them into a bitter expression of suspicion and deathly hatred. In an instant he had reached the girl, and, seizing her in a tentacle-like grip, had dragged her inside the room, desperately trying to close the door behind her. But Whitrock, who had been standing behind the girl, whirled and put his foot forward so as to prevent the closing of the door; then, with an almost superhuman effort, he wrenched the door from the hands of Lathrop. He plunged headlong into the laboratory, and the door slammed in his wake.

He looked up to find that the professor had released the girl and jumped to the side of his instrument, grasping in one hand the handle of an electric switch. One glance from the newspaperman sufficed to tell him that a large electric motor was belted to the apparatus. Another glance showed him unerringly that Lathrop was insane.

The professor laughed—a long, taunting, jeering laugh. Paul stepped in front of Murvia as though to shield her, but the action drove the maniac into further bursts of jeering laughter.

"Yes, sure," he chortled, "get in front of her, as if that will do either of you any good! The Whispering Death penetrates everything, and *I am the Whispering Death!*"

Paul saw that it was out of the question to reason with Lathrop, and began looking around for ways to escape. He was interrupted by the taunting laugh.

"You can't get away this time, Whitrock," the maniac sneered. "You got away this morning, else you wouldn't be here, but you'll be dead when you leave this room, because I'm going to kill us all. Only the three of us know about the Whispering Death's secret, and in a minute I'm going to close this switch. The motor will turn over the machine to make the death sound, and we'll all die together."

Paul looked at Murvia, over his shoulder. She was strangely calm, but her eyes were wide. He put his hand back, and she slipped her tiny fingers into his palm trustingly. He turned to Lathrop again just as the maniac began to speak:

"Yes, that's what you get for interfering with other people's affairs," he chattered shrilly. "Just as I got around to making all the unhappy people in the world happy, you break in and force me to end it all. Well, you'll die with me!

"No, no, no," he continued in spite of the newspaperman's attempted protest. "I know what you're going to say—that you will arrange for me to escape if I let you go, but no, *no, NO!*

"The greatest boon to mankind since the world began," he rambled on, "dies with me tonight. The rich

who were so rich that they were miserable, and the poor who were so poor that they were miserable—all of them I've made happy with the Whispering Death. And they're happier dead, they are, they are!

"Four years I struggled to invent the sound waves, and then a few weeks ago I found it. And I was going to give it to the government—but what if I had? They would have conquered the world, and everybody would have been more miserable. So I began to make people happy myself.

"I carried it around in a grip, and when I found miserable people I let them hear the sound, and they became happy. And it was fun, fun, fun! Then the newspapers began to make a row, and I laid my Death notices where they would be found, and they didn't stop. And I decided to make you, Whitrock, an example. But you escaped! You won't again!"

Lack of breath forced the maniac to cease his tirade for a moment, and Whitrock began to consider ways of preventing the professor's throwing the switch. Suddenly, when the situation looked most gloomy, Paul noticed that the maniac had a telephone headset on his head, and that the loose end of the cord dangled at his knees. Simultaneously Whitrock realized that the sockets for plugging them were still on the old radio cabinet from which the professor had fashioned his death-sound apparatus. Perhaps—Paul became hopeful—perhaps to plug in the headset would cut out the sound chamber, which corresponded to the loud speaker on the radio. At any rate, it was the only hope, Paul realized. But it might be too late.

The insane man was holding up a watch. "See that second hand on that watch?" he questioned.

Whitrock nodded, although he couldn't see the hand.

"Well, in ten seconds I'm going to close this switch and then we'll all be dead, and happy! I'll count, and when I say 'ten,' then goodbye."

Paul looked grim, and squeezed Murvia's hand reassuringly, but the firm pressure of her hand showed that she had given up hope. Hastily Paul looked around for something which he might insert into the socket to cut out the sound. He found nothing, but to plug in the earphones which the maniac was wearing would cause him to hear the sound, and kill him.

"One! Two! Three!"

"Maybe," thought Paul, "I can keep the switch open!"

"Four! Five!"

Paul stiffened, and a determined look came into his eyes. The professor looked gleeful, utterly happy.

"Six! Seven!"

Paul looked desperately around for something else to plug in. He didn't want to kill Lathrop like that.

"Eight! Nine! Ten!"

Lathrop closed the switch with a jerk of his hand, and simultaneously with the whiz of the electric motor there came to their ears the dull roar of the Whispering Death. The insane man settled back in his chair, secure in the thought that all was over.

Instantly Paul was upon him, and grasping the metal plug on the end of the earphone cord, fought to put it into the socket on the cabinet. Maybe, he thought, he could cut out the sound, and then tear the phones from Lathrop's head in time to save him too. The switch was out of reach.

The maniac fought hard, and the pain in Paul's ears became intense. Swiftly the tone of the Whispering Death was becoming higher and higher, threatening at any time to reach that point where it would snuff out their lives.

One final desperate lunge netted Whitrock nothing. The insane man fought like a lion at bay. Paul felt

himself becoming dizzy, and lashed out wildly with his fists at Lathrop. The old man sank under the blows, and the newspaperman, as though it were his last act alive, put the plug into the socket.

The Whispering Death sound stopped instantly, and Paul, recovering quickly, endeavored to wrest the headset from the ears of Lathrop. Then he whirled and opened the switch.

But the Whispering Death had come to Professor Lathrop. Already the stiffening arms encircled his head, clamping the earphones tight against the organs, and fight as Paul would, he could not tear the receivers away. The man who had been Professor Lathrop writhed for a moment, his features twisted into a horrible grimace; then he fell back on the table. The grimace seemed a frozen picture of the maniacal laughter with which he had taunted them a few moments before.

Paul turned to the girl, and she came toward him slowly.

"Murvia!" he said uncertainly.

Her eyes were soft, and warm.

"Paul!" she said.

His arms closed around her.

A Blood-chilling Tale Is This

THRICE DEAD

By ALSTON LOVEJOY

WHEN Scurtin told me that only three people would attend the funeral, I did not consider it an uncommon event. I had been accustomed to viewing the dead for some years, since I am a physician, so I went without any amplified sense of sorrow, repugnance, or terror.

The corpse had been a distant relative of Scurtin's. I had not intimately known him; in fact I had met him only twice at social events of no special importance.

He had died, I think, of some form of liver disease, the exact character of which I am not fully aware. I had not been informed of any remarkably distinguishable traits accompanying the death, and I believe that none of us regarded the then coming funeral as one of distinction. But certainly, there came events that appeared to me not only horrible, but seemed at that time inexplicable. I am often haunted in my dreams by the unforgettable terrors that confronted me that night, and funerals unnerve me whenever it is my duty to attend them.

The time set for the funeral was the unreasonable hour of seven p. m., according to the wishes set forth in the will of the deceased. I had often noticed that people who had seemed in no way mentally unbalanced during their lives, sometimes left their last wishes in a nowise sensible fashion. However, I had become used to this sort of thing and I saw no reason to be unduly startled. I had indeed attended two funerals, which were otherwise uneventful, at the unearthly hour of midnight.

So it was that after a rather strenuous day I went wearily to the under-

taking parlors, which were located on the west side of town. It seemed to me at the time that it had been foolish to have the corpse embalmed there, because the burial was not to take place in the cemetery adjoining the west side, but was to be on the directly opposite, or east side, which was four miles from the place chosen. On top of all this the dead man had left another wish: That his body should be transported to the cemetery by coach and that the horses should proceed not faster than a walk the full distance.

I had become angry when I had waited at the parlors for over half an hour, for I was tired and irritable and sorely in need of sleep. Finally, when I had begun to wonder if I had mistaken the date of the funeral, I heard footsteps approaching and my friend Scurtin appeared with the other member of the trio — a negro minister.

He was to recite the services, which had been composed by the deceased, for exactly twenty-one minutes. At that time he was to stop upon whichever part of the paragraph, sentence, or word he happened to be uttering at that moment. I was rather startled when Scurtin informed me that this highly intelligent negro gentleman was directly related to himself and to the deceased through their late uncle. At this point my interest was aroused and I forgot my ennui in my anticipation of an unusual event.

IT WAS eight-thirty o'clock when we entered the small room in which the corpse lay. The evening was becoming quite dark, and to my utter amazement there was but one light in the room: a small, dim light attached to the altar for the minister to read by. The corpse lay with its feet toward the pulpit, the light striking the soles; and to this day I can not interpret my feeling at the sight of those feet pointing skyward and just a bit awry.

The dim light fell unevenly through the room, making the corpse's face appear exceptionally white, and lined in prominent planes of flesh and bone, stiff with death. The hands, by some unfortunate turn of destiny, had become black!

The coffin was plain, except that the entire top was composed of glass. The room was small and reeking with the odor of stale flowers. These things, and the blankly exposed corpse, gave one an ugly impression of stark death.

The room was so small that Scurtin and I were compelled to sit within two feet of the coffin. As he sat near the head, I followed suit and sat just opposite him. He looked rather badly shaken. I had a very drawn feeling mingled with an indefinable emotion closely resembling a terrible loneliness. It seemed unendurably quiet; but now that time has passed, I remember having heard passing automobiles, feet pattering on the sidewalk, the sound of children's voices and laughter in the distance.

I became extremely impatient while the tall negro minister stood unmoving for fully five minutes before his voice broke the silence. He looked huge and distorted in the dim light.

When he at last spoke, his voice startled me. It was deep and vibrant. He chanted, rather than recited. His slow voice, half singing, half droning, echoed ominously through the small room.

I have here a copy of the sermon. Perhaps when you have reflected upon what I have said, you will be able to understand my feeling as I listened to this:

Into the dark chasm. Into the dark chasm. Into death I ride. Slowly. Slowly. Sweetly slow. Into the dark chasm.

Out of the light I go. Out of the light. And into the Dark, sweet flowers, I float passionately. Into the Dark, sweet flowers, I float passionately. Into the Dark.

Farewell. Farewell. Things that my hands have touched. Things that my lips have touched. Farewell. Things that my eyes have fondled. Things that my tongue has tasted. Farewell. Things that my cheek has brushed. Words that my lips have discarded. Farewell. Farewell. Women my heart has loved. Books that my brain has loved. Farewell. Hope, farewell. Farewell. Farewell.

Phantoms have haunted me. Phantoms have taunted me. Phantoms have haunted me. Phantoms, I come to thee, phantoms that haunted me. Deep in the dark night's breast phantoms came unto me. They are to be caressed by my dead memory. Phantoms that taunted me, farewell to all of ye. Devils were some to see. They made life Hell for me. Come, Death, I wait for thee. Ride me upon the sea of all Eternity. Of all Eternity. All of Eternity. . . .

Seurtin was weeping now without control. I was hypnotized by the negro's voice. I felt as though I were freezing. I reasoned the thing out to myself and was, for a few more moments of that everlasting sermon, pacified. At this point I glanced at the body and I would have sworn that I saw one of the hands move!

I looked away from the body, still with that uncontrollable feeling that it had moved, and I tried to watch the negro. He spoke without apparent emotion. His eyes were almost closed. Still, out of the corner of my eye I seemed to see the shadow behind those hands move weirdly in the dim light. Perhaps I was simply afraid to look; I know that I did not want to. It took every ounce of my will-power to fix my eyes toward the negro. Finally, like a child frightened in a dark bedroom, I closed my eyes. Alas! to no avail. I could hear it move. A rustling sound. A sound of dead hands against glass. With that mysterious sixth sense with which we have been endowed, I could *feel* the presence of another being in the room.

The sermon became more and more the singsong wail of the negro hymnal as it progressed. The minister continued to chant:

Over my head. Over my head. Over my head there swings a light. There is a light over my head. Under my feet. Under my feet. There is a cloud. There is a cloud under my feet. A heavenly cloud—under my feet—so weary. Oh-h-h-h so weary. Yes—so weary.

Though the earth shall not quake as the—as . . .

Time of all times for a tremor! I thought my imagination must be getting the best of my better reasoning, for I heard the low, faint rumble of the light California earthquake. I opened my eyes and saw the room moving about me. The corpse was shaking about in the coffin, its feet rattling a tattoo against the sides of the casket. Scurtin's eyes were closed tightly; his fists were clenched, but his mouth was grim with a determination to conceal his real emotion. The negro seemed peculiarly unmoved as he continued the sermon. He did not change his voice, expression or poise, but continued that same singsong, nerve-splitting chant.

THE rest of the sermon I did not clearly apprehend. It was a tormenting groan during the events that followed the earthquake. Shades of the invisible world poured icy perspiration over my whole being, while a whirlwind of heinous events sapped my strength and reasoning. I acted by main force, hardly knowing what I was about. Time became a fourth dimension of Hell.

I saw the corpse's knees begin to bend as it drew its feet up like a sleeping man. But unlike a living being it was covered with glass instead of yielding cloth. To my inexpressible horror I saw the glass bending from the slow, diabolical force beneath it. Scurtin leaned forward and peered closely at the rigid face within

the coffin, a face no whiter now than his own. I realized that the glass would soon break. I covered my face with my arms to protect myself from the glass. It broke with a double report, *crack! crack!* like shots from a revolver, louder in the smallness of the room.

I immediately uncovered my face while the pieces of glass fell clattering to the floor. Scurtin's eyes were wide with bewilderment and shock. His mouth hung loosely open. His chin had a long cut across it from the flying glass. He was evidently spellbound—hypnotized by the thing—for he did not move, but glared with a terrible stillness. The negro was unmoved during this time and continued with his services as though he were addressing an attentive congregation.

I assumed a calm countenance, and arising I went to Scurtin's side to pacify him, but as I approached I joined him in his terror.

The eyes of the corpse were wide open, apparently staring into the eyes of Scurtin. The hands of the corpse were slowly rising. Black hands sprinkled with bits of sparkling glass. Hands that seemed to move by some unseen power rather than any living force.

Scurtin and I stood side by side bending horrified over this monster. We were like men adhered to the floor in the dread clutches of nightmare. The room seemed hot and oppressive. Scurtin's face was streaked with perspiration and tears, mingled with blood from the gash on his chin.

The left hand of the corpse came toward him in a painfully slow, steady, puppet-like motion. The right hand lifted skyward with the fingers spreading apart fiendishly. The left hand was spreading out full in Scurtin's face! I was paralyzed as I saw it closing upon his cheeks. Scurtin screamed, "Oh, God!"

The realization of what was happening came to me vaguely. I was dazedly aware that I must do something. I, a physician, would not be expected to stand stupefied while a man was driven into hysterics, into madness.

I leaped to Scurtin's back, caught him by the shoulders, and pulled him to one side. The corpse did not slacken its inhuman grip. I threw both arms around Scurtin's body and tried to wrest him from the thing. The coffin toppled from its bier! The corpse rolled out, still clinging to the now unconscious Scurtin. It hung by one hand from Scurtin's face. It hung with its feet drawn up, its eyes staring ahead.

My abhorrence was beyond reason as I seized that suspended monstrosity by the wrist and tried to release its grip. It had the strength of a vise. I laid Scurtin on the floor and taking the clutching hand in both of mine I broke every finger of it. Each one popped loudly.

The negro was still chanting as I dragged Scurtin from the room to revive him. As I closed the door behind me I heard the few closing words:

. . . *and Death descends not until the body is in the gra* . . .

The words ceased abruptly as a distant chime struck the closing time. Twenty-one minutes had passed!

When Scurtin had been revived I returned to the room where the negro had remained. He was lifting the corpse into the coffin. He completed the job of drawing its arms back into position and placing the lid over it. I noticed that his expression of philosophical calm had not changed. He was about to leave the room when he turned to me.

"Even an earthquake can be a blessing," he said softly.

I was about to answer that I had supposed earthquakes to be a curse rather than a blessing, especially since the most recent one. Before I could find words hot enough for a reply the negro answered his own puzzle.

"The short moments involved in the excitement following the quake," he

said, "were just sufficient to allow me to eliminate one phrase in that accursed sermon. It seems that the man suspected Brother Scurtin, most absurdly to be sure, of some hideous plot against him. What the plot could have been I can not imagine, but the phrase that I omitted prophesied a most gruesome revenge on Brother Scurtin—strangulation!"

"Impossible!" I cried.

"Impossible, according to the phrase, under only one condition," he replied. "It declared that 'only supernatural intervention can save him who has heard this curse'."

Before I could answer he had left the room. I heard him walking about outside, speaking to the horses as he backed the carriage up to the doorway. I glanced quickly about, thrust my hand into my pocket, gripped my jack-knife. I opened it, eyed the long, glittering blade. I had used it in an emergency case once. It was sharp. Down the thin blade I ran my thumb lightly. I winced as a drop of blood leapt to life.

The lid of the dark box had not yet been fastened.

DURING the long ride to the cemetery the sky clouded with huge, black shadows. Great drops of rain suddenly pattered on the carriage-top. They brought reality. I was pacified.

When we returned to town we drove directly to Scurtin's house, and Scurtin immediately went in. The negro remained a moment with me.

"Doctor," he asked, "what would you name as the exact reason for what happened tonight?"

"Simply muscular contraction," I answered, remembering that brevity of speech is a joyously deceptive virtue.

"So I thought," he continued, "but the visible events betrayed higher understanding. I have, no doubt, committed an unforgivable atrocity tonight. Confession to you is the one way that I can unload my soul. Can you keep this secret?"

"Surely," I answered. There was a long pause.

"Well, perhaps one of your profession could hardly understand the feeling that overcame me. I was cut to the soul. I had a sense that there was life—another life—in that room—do you understand? And then you left—left the room. The dead man—how can I put it?—ever explain myself?—I thrust a kni—he is twice—dead." The negro had finally broken under the strain. He turned his face from me and sobbed softly.

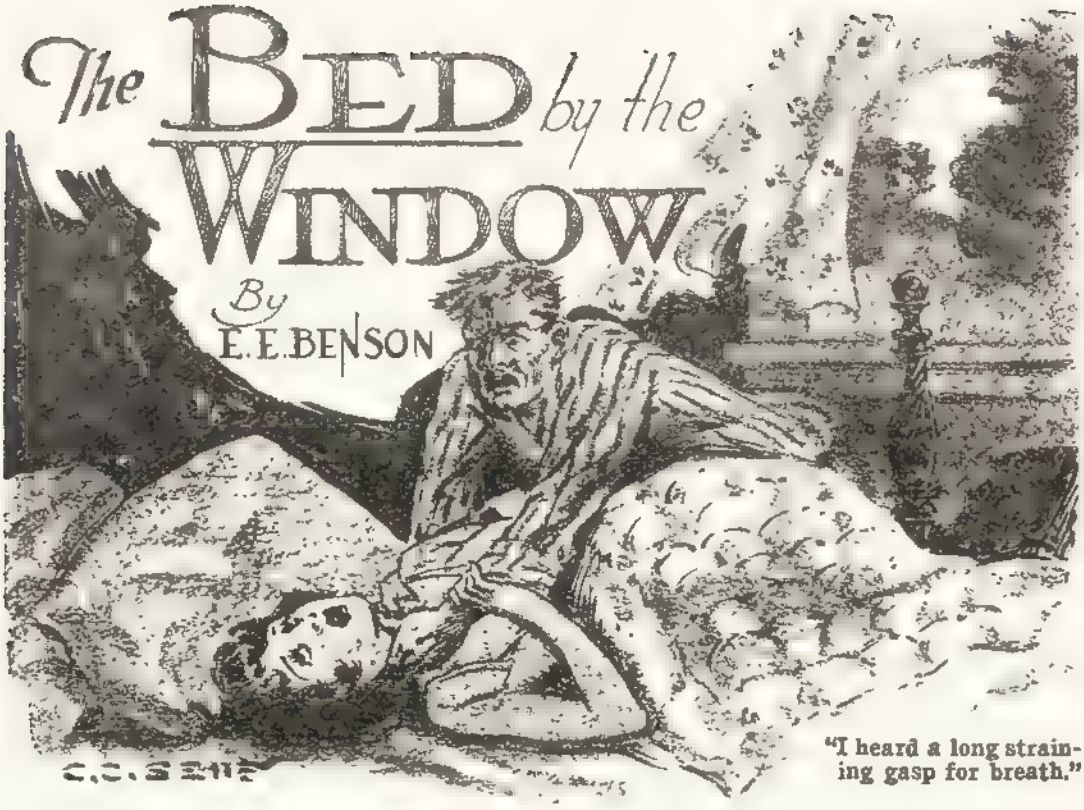
"Say no more," I whispered. My hand crept to my pocket and fingered my own knife uneasily.

"Doctor, I am sorry——" he began.

"There is no need to be," I interrupted. He lifted his face and I saw his expression of surprise as I continued. "The man is not twice dead—*but thrice.*"

The BED by the WINDOW

By E. F. BENSON



"I heard a long straining gasp for breath."

PROLOGUE

MY FRIEND Lionel Bailey understands the works of Mr. Einstein, and he reads them with the rapt thrilled attention that more ordinary people give to detective stories. He says they are so exciting that he can not put them down: they make him late for dinner. It may be owing to this unusual mental conformation of his that he talks about time and space in a manner that is occasionally puzzling, for he thinks of them as something quite different from our accepted notions of them, and tonight as we sat over my fire hearing a spring-gale of March bugling outside, and dashing solid sheets of rain against my window, I had found him very difficult to follow. But though he thinks in terms which the average man finds unintelligible, he is always ready (though with an effort) to quit the austere heights on which he naturally roams, and explain. And his explanations are often so lucid that the average man (I allude to myself) can generally get some idea of what he means. Just now he had made some extremely cryptic remark about the real dimensions of time, and of the palpable incorrectness of our conception of it: but rightly interpreting the moaning sound with which I received this, he very kindly came to my aid.

"You see, time, as we think of it," he said, "is a most meaningless convention. We talk of the future and the past as if they were opposite poles, whereas they are really the same. What we thought of as the future a minute ago or a century ago, we now see to be the past: the future is always in process of becoming the past. The two are the same, as I said just now, looked at from different points."

"But they aren't the same," said I, rather incautiously. "The future may become the past, but the past never becomes the future."

Lionel sighed.

"A most unfortunate remark," he said. "Why, the whole of the future is made up of the past: it entirely depends on it; the future consists of nothing else but the past."

I did see what he meant. There was no denying it, so I tried something else.

"A slippery slidy affair altogether," I said. "The future becomes the past, and the past the future. But luckily there's one firm spot in this welter, and that's the present. That's solid: there's nothing wrong with the present, is there?"

Lionel moved slightly in his chair: an indulgent, patient movement.

"Oh, dear; oh dear," he said. "You've chosen as your firm solid point the most shifting and unstable of all. What is the present? By the time you've said 'This is the present,' it has slid away into the past. The past has got some sort of real existence, and we know that the future will blossom out of it. But the present hardly can be said to exist at all, for the moment you say that it is here it has changed. It is far the most elusive part of the phantom which we call Time. It is the door, that is the most that can be said for it, through which the future passes into the past. Yet somehow, though it scarcely exists, we can see from it into the past and into the future."

I felt I could venture to contradict that.

"Thank heaven we can't," I said. "It would be the ultimate terror to be able to see into the future. It's bad enough sometimes to be able to remember the past."

He shook his head.

"But we can see into the future," he said. "The future is entirely evolved out of the past, and if we knew everything about the past, we should equally know everything about the future. Everything that happens is merely a fresh link in the chain of unalterable consequences. The little we know about the solar system, for instance, makes it a certainty that the sun will rise tomorrow."

"Oh, that kind of thing," said I. "Just material, mathematical deductions."

"No, all kinds of things. For instance, I'm sure you know the certainty that we all have now and then, that somebody present is about to say some particular definite sentence. A few seconds pass, and then out it comes precisely as we had known it would. That's not so material and mathematical. It's a little instance of a very big thing called clairvoyance."

"I know what you mean," I said. "But it may be some trick of the brain. It isn't a normal experience."

"Everything is normal," said Lionel. "Everything depends on some rule. We only call things abnormal when we don't know what the rule is. Then there are mediums: mediums constantly see into the future, and to some extent everyone is a medium; we've all had glimpses."

He paused a moment.

"And there is such a simple explanation," he said. "You see, we're all existing in eternity, though, just for the span of our life-time, we're also existing in Time. But there's eternity outside Time, though the mist of material things usually obscures it from our vision. Now and then the mist clears, and then—how shall I express anything so simple?—then we look down on Time, like a little speck of an island below us, quite clear, future and past and present, and awfully small. We get just a glimpse, no more, and then the mist closes round us again. But on these occasions we can see into the future just as clearly as we can look into the past, and we can see not only those who have passed outside the mist of material phenomena, whom we call ghosts,

but the future or the past of those who are still inside it. They all appear to us then as they are in eternity, where there is neither past nor future."

I suddenly found that my grip on what he was saying was beginning to give way.

"That's enough for one night," said I flippantly. "The future is the past, and the past is the future, and there isn't any present, and ghosts may come from what has happened or what will happen. I should like to see a ghost out of the future. . . . And as you've had a whisky and soda in the immediate past, I feel sure you will have one in the immediate future, as it's the same thing. Say when."

* * * * *

I WAS off into the country next day in order to make amends for a couple of months of wilful idleness in London by hermitizing myself in a small village on the coast of Norfolk, where I knew nobody, and where, I was credibly informed, there was nothing to do: I should thus have to work in order to get through the hours of the day. There was a house there, kept by a man and his wife who took in lodgers, and there I proposed to plant myself till I had got through these criminal arrears. Mr. Hopkins had been a butler, and his wife a cook, and, so I was told by a friend who had made trial of their ministrations, they made their inmates extremely comfortable. There were a couple of other folk, Mr. Hopkins had written to me, now staying in the house, and he regretted he could not give me a sitting-room to myself. But he could provide me with a big double bedroom, where there was ample room for a writing-table and my books. That was good enough.

Hopkins had ordered a car to convey me from the nearest railway station, six miles distant, to Faringham, and a little before sunset, on a bright windy day of March, I came to the village. Though I had certainly never been here before I had some odd sense of remote familiarity with it, and I suppose I must have seen and forgotten some hamlet which was like it. There was just one street lined with fishermen's houses, built of rounded flints, with nets hung up to dry on the walls of small plots in front, and a few miscellaneous shops. We passed through the length of this, and came at the end to a much bigger, three-storied house, at the gate of which we stopped. A spacious square of garden separated it from the road, with espaliered pear-trees bordering the path that led to the front door: beyond flat open country stretched away to the horizon, intersected with big dikes and ditches, across which I could see, a mile distant, a line of white shingle where lay the sea. My arrival was hooted on the motor-horn, and Hopkins, a prim dark spare man, came out to see to my luggage. His wife was waiting inside, and she took me up to my room.

Certainly it would do very well: there were two windows commanding a view of the marsh eastward, in one of which was set a big writing-table. A fire sparkled on the hearth; two beds stood in opposite angles of the room, one near the second window, the other by the fireplace in front of which was a large armchair. This armchair had a footstool, under the table was a waste-paper basket, and on it one of those old-fashioned but convenient contrivances which show the day of the month and the day of the week, with pegs to adjust them. Everything had been thought out for comfort, everything looked spotlessly clean and cared-for, and at once I felt myself at home here.

"But what a charming room, Mrs. Hopkins," I said. "It's just what I want."

She moved away from the door as I spoke, to let her husband enter with my bags. She gave him one swift ugly look and I found myself thinking "How she dislikes him!" But the im-

pression was momentary, and having elected to sleep in the bed by the fireplace, I went downstairs with her for a cup of tea, while her husband unpacked for me.

When I came up again, the unpacking was over, and all my effects dispersed, clothes laid in drawers and cupboards, and my books and papers neatly stacked on the table. There was no settling down to be done: I had stepped into possession of this pleasant room, as if I had long lived and worked in it. Then my eye fell on the little adjustable contrivance on the table for displaying the current date, and I saw that this one detail had escaped the vigilance of my hosts, for it marked Tuesday, May 8th, instead of the true date, Thursday, March 22nd. I was rather pleased to observe that the Hopkinses were not too perfect, and after twisting the record back to the correct date, I instantly settled down to work, for there was nothing to get used to before I felt at home.

A plain and excellent dinner was served some three hours later, and I found that one of my fellow-guests was an elderly sepulchral lady with a genteel voice who spoke but rarely and then about the weather. She had by her on the table a case of Patience cards and a bottle of medicine. She took a dose of the latter before and after her meal, and at once retired to the common sitting-room where that night and every other she played long sad games of Patience. The other was a ruddy young man who confided to me that he was making a study of the minute fresh-water fleas that infest fresh-water snails, for which daily he dragged the dikes. He had been so fortunate as to find a new species which would undoubtedly be called *Pulex Dodsoniana* in his honor.

Hopkins waited on us with soft velvet-footed attention, and his wife brought in the admirable fruits of her kitchen. Once there was some slight collision of crockery in her tray, and happening to look up I saw the glance he gave her. It was not mere dislike that inspired it, but some quiet deadly hatred.

Dinner over, I went in for a few minutes to the sitting-room where the sepulchral lady was sitting down to her Patience and Mr. Dodson to his microscope, and very soon betook myself upstairs to resume my work.

The room was pleasantly warm, my things laid out for the night, and for a couple of hours I busied and buried myself. Then the door of the room, without any inquiry of knocking, silently opened, and Mrs. Hopkins stood there. She gave a little gasp of dismay as she saw me.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir," she said. "I quite forgot: so stupid of me. But this is the room my husband and I usually occupy, if it is not being used. So forgetful of me."

I AWOKE next morning after long traffic with troubled nonsensical dreams to find the sun pouring in at the windows as Hopkins drew up the blinds. I thought that Mr. Dodson had come in to show me a collection of huge fleas that battened on Patience cards, or rather that would be abundant there on Tuesday, May 8th, for, as he pointed out, there were none there now since the present had no existence. And then Hopkins, who had been bending over the bed by the window, apologized for being in my room, and explained that he could hate his wife more intensely here: he hoped that I had not been disturbed by him. Then there was the crack of some explosion, which resolved itself into the rattle of the up-going blind, and there indeed he was. . . .

I was soon out of bed and dressing, but somehow that farrago of dream-stuff concocted out of actual experience, hung about me. I could not help feeling that there was significance in it, if I could only find the clue, and it did not, as is usual with dreams, fade and evaporate with my

waking: it seemed to retreat into hidden caves and recesses of my brain and wait in ambush there till it was called out.

Then my eye fell on the date-recorder on my table, and I saw with surprize that it still registered Tuesday, May 8th, though I would have been willing to swear that last night I had adjusted it to the correct date. And with that surprize was mingled a faint and rather uncomfortable misgiving, and involuntarily I asked myself *what* Tuesday, *what* May 8th was indicated there. Was it some day in past years, or in years yet to come? I knew that such a question was an outrage on common sense; probably I imagined that I had screwed the cylinder back to the present, but had not actually done so. But now I felt that this date referred to some event that had happened or was to happen. It was a record or some mysterious presage out of the future—like a railway-signal suddenly hoisted at night at some wayside station. The line lay empty, but presently out of the darkness would come a yell and a roar from the approaching train. . . . This time, anyhow, there should be no mistake, and I knew that I moved the date back again.

THE days passed slowly at first, as is their wont in new surroundings, and then began to move with ever-accelerating speed as I settled into an industrious routine. I worked all morning, turned myself unwillingly out of doors for a couple of hours in the afternoon, and worked again after tea and once more till round about midnight. My task prospered, I was well, and the house most comfortable, but all the time there was some instinct bidding me leave the place, or, since I successfully resisted that, to get through with my work as soon as might be and be gone. That strong tonic air of the coast often made me drowsy when I came in, and I would slip from my desk into the big armchair and sleep for a little. But always after these short recuperative naps, I would wake with a start, feeling that Hopkins had come silently into the room as I slept, and in some inexplicable panic of mind I would wheel round, dreading to see him. Yet it was not, if I may so express it, his bodily presence which I feared, but some psychical phantom of him, which had sinister business on hand in this room. His thoughts were here—was that it?—something in him that hated and schemed. That business was not concerned with me; I seemed to be but a spectator waiting for the curtain to rise on some grim drama. Then, as this confused and fearful moment of waking passed, the horror slipped away, not dispersing exactly, but concealing itself and ready to emerge again.

Yet all the time the routine of the well-ordered house went smoothly on. Hopkins was busy with his jobs, doing much of the house-work, and valetting and waiting at table: his wife continued to ply her admirable skill in the kitchen. Sometimes its door would be open, as I went upstairs after dinner, and I had a glimpse of them as I passed, sitting friendly at their supper. Indeed I began to wonder whether that gleam of dislike on the one side and of sheer hate on the other, which I fancied I had seen, was not some fiction of my own mind, for if it was real there would surely be some betrayal of the truth, a voice raised in anger, and a sudden shrill answer. But there was none: quietly and efficiently the two went about their work, and sometimes late at night I could hear them pass to the attic-floor above, where they slept. A few footsteps would sound muffled overhead, and then there was silence, till in the morning I, waking early, heard the discreet movements begin again, and soft footfalls pass my door on their way downstairs.

This room of mine, where for three weeks now I had been so prosperously at work, was growing a haunted and

terrible place to me. Never once had I seen in it anything outside the ordinary, nor heard any sound that betokened another presence except my own and that of the flapping flames on the hearth, and I told myself that it was I, or, more exactly, some fanciful sense of the unseen and the unheard that was troubling me and causing this ghostly invasion. Yet the room itself had a share in it too, for downstairs, or out in the windy April day, or even just outside the door of the room, I was wholly free of this increasing obsession. Something had happened here which had left its mark not on material things, and which was imperceptible to the organ of sight and hearing, the effect of which was trickling not merely into my brain, but filtering through it into the very source of life. Yet the explanation that a phantom was arising out of the past would not wholly fit, for whatever this haunting was, it was getting nearer, and though its lineaments were not yet visible, they were forming with greater distinctness below the veil that hid them. It was establishing touch with me, as if it was some denizen of a remote world that reached across time and space, and was already laying its fingers on me, and it took advantage of small physical happenings in that room to encompass me with its influence. For instance, when one evening I was brushing my hair before dinner, a white featureless face peered over my shoulder, and then with an arrested shudder I saw that this was only the reflection of the oval looking-glass on the ceiling. Or, as I lay in bed, before putting out my light, a puff of wind came in through the open sash, making the striped curtain to belly, and before I could realize the physical cause of it, there was a man in striped pajamas bending over the bed by the window. Or a wheeze of escaping gas came from the coals on the hearth, and to my ears it sounded like a strangled gasp of someone in the room. Something was at work, using the trivial sounds and sights for its own ends, kneading away in my brain to make it ready and receptive for the revelation it was preparing for it. It worked very cleverly, for the morning after the curtain had shaped itself into the pajamaed figure bending over the other bed, Hopkins, when he called me, apologized for his attire. He had overslept himself, and in order not to delay further, had come down in a coat over his striped pajamas. Another night the wind lifted the cretonne covering that lay over the bed by the window, inflating it into the shape of a body there. It stirred and turned before it was deflated again, and it was just then that the coal on the hearth gasped and choked.

BUT by now my work was completed: I had determined not to yield to the fear of any strange and troubling fancies until that was done, and tonight, very late, I scrawled a dash across the page below the final words, and added the date. I sat back in my chair, yawning and tired and pleased that I was now free to go back to London next day. For nearly a week now I had been alone in the house, and I reflected how natural it was that, diving into myself all day over my work, and seeing nobody, I had been creating phantoms to keep me company. Idly enough, my glance lighted on the record of the day of the week and the month, and I saw that once more it showed Tuesday, May 8th. . . . Next moment I perceived that my eyes had played me false; they had visualized something that was inside my brain, for a second glance told me that the day indicated there was indeed Tuesday, but April 24th.

"Certainly it's time I went away," I said to myself.

The fire was out, and the room rather cold. Feeling very sleepy, and also very content that I had finished

my task, I undressed quickly, leaving shut the window by the other bed. But the curtains were undrawn and the blind was up, and the last thing I saw before I went to sleep was a narrow slip of moonlight on the floor.

I AWOKE. The moonlight had broadened to a thick oblong patch, very bright. The bed beyond it was in shadow, but clearly visible, and I saw that there was someone sleeping there. And there was someone standing at the foot of the bed, a man in striped pajamas. He took a couple of steps across the patch of moonlight, and then swiftly thrusting his arms forward, he bent over the bed. The figure that lay there moved: the knees shot up, and an arm came out from beneath the coverlet. The bed creaked and shuddered with the struggle that was going on, but the man held tight to what he was grasping. He jumped on to the bed, crushing the knees flat again, and over his shoulder I saw and recognized the face of the woman who lay there. Once she got her neck free from the strangle-hold, and I heard a long straining gasp for breath. Then the man's fingers found their place again: once more the bed shook as with the quivering of leaves in a wind, and after that all was still.

The man got up: he stood for a moment in the patch of moonlight, wiping the sweat from his face, and I could see him clearly. And then I knew that I was sitting up in bed, looking out into the familiar room. It was bright with the big patch of moonlight that lay on the floor, and empty and quiet. There was the other bed with its cretonne covering, flat and tidy.

THE sequel is probably familiar to most people as the Faringham murder. On the morning of May 8th, according to the account given by Hopkins to the police, he came downstairs as usual from the attic where he had slept about half-past seven, and found that the lock of the front door of his house had been forced, and the door was open. His wife was not yet down, and he went upstairs to the room on the first floor where they often slept together, when it was not being used by their guests, and found her lying strangled in her bed. He instantly rang up the police and also the doctor, though he felt sure she was dead, and while waiting for them observed that a drawer of the table, in which she was accustomed to keep the money she had in the house, had been broken open. She had been to the bank the day before and cashed a check for fifty pounds, in order to pay the bills of last month, and the notes were missing. He had seen her place them in the drawer when she brought them back. Questioned as to his having slept in the attic, while his wife had slept alone below, he said that this room had been lately occupied, and would be occupied again in a few days: he had not therefore thought it worth while to move down, though his wife had done so.

But there were two weak points in this story. The first was that the woman had been strangled as she lay in bed, full length, with the blankets and sheet over her. But if the supposed burglar had throttled her, because she had been awakened by his entrance, and threatened to raise the alarm, it seemed incredible that she should have remained lying there with the bedclothes up to her chin. It looked as if the murder was a wanton one, and had nothing to do with the burglary. Again, though the drawer into which she had put her money had been forced, it had not been locked. The burglar had only to pull the handle of it, and it would have opened. It looked as if the murderer had wanted to convey the impression that he was a burglar.

Hopkins was detained, and the house searched, and the missing roll of notes was found in the lining of an old greatcoat of his in the attic.

Before he suffered the extreme penalty, he confessed his crime and told the manner of its execution. He had come down from his bedroom, entered his wife's room and strangled her. He had then forced the front door, and, unnecessarily, the drawer where she had put her money. . . .

Reading it, I thought of Lionel Bailey's theory, and my own experience in the room where the murder was committed.

The Desecrated Dead Body Sought Revenge

MUMMY

By KELSEY PERCIVAL KITCHEL

I HAVE always prided myself on being a practical man; prosaic, if you will. In the old days the boys used to call me the man from Missouri. . . .

Well, so I was. I had to be shown —and I was shown. Let me tell you. . . .

It was in South America that the thing happened. I had been engaged by the Babylonia Copper Company to go to their mine and smelter two miles high in the Andes. Being a metallurgical engineer and having had blast-furnace experience in the New Jersey plant, I was put in charge of the furnaces there in the desert.

At that time Babylonia was in process of growth and organization; it was not the finished affair that it is nowadays with its hospital, married quarters, white women and a club. When I went down from New York there wasn't a wife in camp. We men —a handful of us—lived at the mess-house and worked eighteen hours a day for seven days a week. Oh, yes, the pay was good; we would not have stayed if it had not been for the high salaries. You see, there was not a thing to amuse a chap. We were fifteen miles from railhead, living in a tiny village clinging to a mountain-side that is a desert in the absolute meaning of that much-abused word. You yourself have seen so-called deserts, haven't you? And they were usually graced with sage-brush, lizards, mosses and lichens, weren't they? Well, the Atacama has nothing on it that may be called "life." Not a thing. Rolling reaches and ridges of black, volcanic rocks and red gray sands; great salt-caked basins; leagues and leagues of alkaline dust blown westward at night by the winds pouring down from the Andes, then blown eastward during the day with the winds coming from the coast.

Yes, you have to be pretty hard-boiled to keep your sanity in such a place. We worked on eight-hour shifts there at the furnaces, of course. . . . My buddy was Preston, a good scout who roomed with me and had the next shift to mine, knew his business and all that. Kellogg looked after the third shift in the twenty-four hours.

After I'd been there a year, more or less, I had naturally absorbed plenty of information about the surrounding country. I'd heard stories of the Indian burying-grounds over at Chiu-Chiu; some of the boys had managed to get leave and ride over

there—twenty miles of vile going through the desert. They had brought back a few turquoise beads, some pots and so forth. I had never been particularly interested in archeology, but since I couldn't pry a vacation loose from the G. M.—and by "vacation" I mean a trip to port where there is a decent hotel; there's a movie-palace, too, and you can sit on a plaza bench and look at white women—as I could not be spared for that, I asked for, and got, a couple of days. Having nothing better to do I decided on Chiu-Chiu and the burying-ground. . . . I believe that one should try everything once, and it seemed a pity to go back home to New York, at the end of my contract, without being able to show some honest-to-goodness relics. And I had a notion to get a skull and have it made into a tobacco-jar. You can tell by that how young I was.

This place was situated on the River Loa, but don't run away with a fancy picture of a meadow-fringed stream, clumps of woodland and fields of waving grain. Nature does not work that way in northern Chile. The Loa struggles down from the snows across a region as desolate and terrible as any inferno. For untold centuries the river has been eating its way through variegated strata laid down eons ago—like the Colorado, you know. In most places the canyon is so steep and deep that no human being could tap enough water for a window-box; but in a very few places the escarpment has broken away, leaving an approach to the narrow, turbid stream. In these rare spots the aborigines have, from time immemorial, irrigated and cultivated the ground. Yes, oases, with skimpy fig and pepper-trees, some highland corn and alfalfa and small, stony patches of puny vegetables. Life is unbelievably difficult for the desert farmer there in the Andes. The huts, made of stone and mud, cluster around a squat, gray church.

Chiu-Chiu, being the seat of a post-house on the Inca highway long before Pizarro dreamed of coming to the New World, had buried its dead for centuries in the sandy wastes outside the little sun-baked oasis.

I rode over there alone. I had always preferred doing things by myself because it seemed to me a mark of weakness to want somebody tagging along for company. . . . I do not think so now, but—well, let me go on.

One does not suffer on such a ride. You and your tough pampa horse have a good drink before starting and you take along a brace of water-bottles—the horse gets a sip from your hat, you understand—and the sun blisters your parched skin, and your eyes squint in the merciless glare, and you sneer at the deceitful mirages that mock you with their glimpses of blue lake-water. . . .

Chiu-Chiu has a hotel—at least a hovel goes by that name; but you can get a meal there and a shake-down. Being so high in the air you are not troubled with insect life, with the exception of flies.

The horse was fed and watered while I got a snack myself; then I started for the burying-ground; the hotel-keeper was a trifle reluctant to direct me but he did not hold off long. You see the farmers depended on selling their green stuff to the Babylonia Mine, and consequently nobody wanted to offend a gringo. We foreigners could arrange to secure our pumpkins and green corn from the port, you see, and the people at the oasis knew it.

WELL, I found the place and, with a trench shovel that I'd fastened to the saddle, I began to dig after having done a little preliminary stamping which, I had been told at Babylonia, was the way to locate a grave. If there is a hollow sound underfoot, why, you have come to a likely place to dig, see?

It was interesting, that delving there in the limitless desert under the towering, snowy peaks of the Andes.

I uncovered a brown, dried figure, mummied by the arid climate. It sat with its arms wrapped around its bony knees and with its head bent; clinging to it were fragments of ancient cloth, and from the fine sand close to it I lifted out darts, lances, arrows, pots and a few rough necklaces of shell and low-grade turquoise. No, he was not a prince; or if he was from a royal house he must have been desperately poor. God knows how long he had been squatting there, looking east and waiting for Judgment Day.

The face was a splendid aquiline one with deep eye-sockets; the brown skin was drawn incredibly snug over the skull. Every bit of flesh was gone —dried away; there was nothing left but what is popularly termed "skin and bone."

He was quite freed of sand by the time I had laid my discoveries on the crusted surface of the desert. I sat down to roll a cigarette and have a swig at the canteen, and I fell to thinking that what I was doing would be called grave-robbery if it were carried on in a modern cemetery; but if a burying-ground is ancient, why, we illogical little microbes called men name our digging "archeological excavation."

I had a feeling of discomfort that I could not understand; I wondered whether the long ride in the blistering heat had anything to do with it. An intuition came to me that I'd better leave that mummy alone with his worthless trumpery; but being a practical man and taking no stock in intuitions, I pulled myself together and rather half-heartedly selected the best of the trash from the sandy grave and packed it in the saddle-bag. That one hole in the ground was enough for me; I did not search for any more; somehow the whole affair seemed a dubious sort of pleasure. I was sick of it and decided suddenly that I would change my plans and return to Babylonia that night instead of sleeping in the *tambo*. I knew that by going slow the horse would be able to make the trip.

I went to work at the head, which I intended using for a tobacco-jar. There was little difficulty in cracking it loose. Brittle, friable, dusty, musty, it came off in my two hands and I stuffed it in the bag along with the other things. . . .

Something seemed to impel me to cover up that stark, headless thing; something seemed to tell me that I should leave him as I had found him. But I obstinately ignored these intuitions.

Back at the *tambo* I bought the horse a good feed and rested him but could not eat the disgusting supper of beans and tough steak offered me. As the moon rose I started for Babylonia, going slowly for the sake of the tired animal under me. There was no danger of my getting lost, as there is a fairly clear trail from the oasis to railhead; and from there I had the mine lights to guide me.

There was a curious tingling sensation all over me; I thought that perhaps I had a touch of sun; or maybe I was getting scurvy, for in those days that disease was not infrequent in the more remote mining-camps in the Andes; we could not depend with any certainty on the oasis vegetables and it was pretty hard to get fresh food up from port. I felt sick, and had delusions. I was sure I was being followed. . . . Now the natives are as gentle as sheep; they never bother gringos. In spite of that I kept looking behind me; I saw nothing but the long shadows of the rocks. It was cold. You know that at an altitude of ten thousand feet the nights are bitter even in the tropics. The sudden changes of temperature crack the rocks, night and day, and

in the pampa silence you can hear the soft whispering "ping" of flaking granite as it comes away and rolls down to the skirt of sand at the base of every boulder.

Once I was sure that the saddle-bag quivered and wriggled. The horse was aware of something extraordinary, to judge by his behavior, because tired as he was he acted the terrified child that night, jumping, shying, shaking.

The lights grew brighter and larger as I neared camp, and I heard the roar of the ore-crushers; for the first time I liked the sound. It seemed almost homelike. It meant that there were human beings round about—lots of 'em! Mostly Bolivian and Chilean laborers, to be sure, but humans at any rate. I was ashamed of myself for wanting to be with my own kind; I was unreasonable, foolish, I told myself.

The corral was below the plant and I stopped there to leave the horse, which was pretty well tuckered out. I left the saddle-bags, too; common sense warned me that I should go up to the mess-house and turn in, for night was nearly gone and I needed sleep. But I did not do that. Preston was on shift at the furnaces and I wanted to get near my buddy. I wanted to tell him what a fizzle my *paseo* had been. He would laugh at my disappointment, perhaps, but I didn't care. He had told me before I started that burying-grounds are not what they are cracked up to be. He had tried that sort of dissipation himself and had found it dull.

So I plowed through the heavy dust and sand, over loose stones, up to the furnaces.

PRESTON was on the feed-floor; he had one man working under his eye, a burly fellow who pulled the loaded barrow of mixed charge off the elevator and dumped the contents into the furnace mouths. As I drew near I saw Preston on the platform above me and climbed up to him. Again I felt that there was something behind me; it was close, too; I seemed to feel two hands on my shoulders—bony, clawlike hands—and yet when I reached back quickly there was nothing there—nothing.

Preston watched me mounting the iron steps but instead of his cheery grin I saw, in the bright glare of the sputtering arclight, an odd, startled expression on his face.

"What in hell?" he shouted as he looked over my shoulder and down toward the lower floor. I turned, too, but there was nothing unusual to be seen.

"There was somebody behind you—with the thinnest face that ever came down the pike!" Preston laughed sheepishly. "Guess I must have been half asleep. I didn't expect you back for another twelve hours—what's the matter?"

I was thinking of that bony face in the saddle-bag at the corral; the head that was to be cleaned up and fashioned into a jar—bah! I shuddered while I was angry with myself for giving in to nerves. Before I could formulate an answer Preston glanced down from the feed-floor, then ran past me down the stairs, two steps at a time. Below, a laborer, tapping the copper, could not stop the flow when the ladle was full. The sparkling, iridescent stream ran wild, and Preston was needed, *pronto*. The Bolivian on the platform had no business to leave his job, but he caught the excitement and ran down the stairs, too, leaving me alone.

A full barrow was standing on the elevator facing the furnace-mouth. It came up just as the Bolivian ran below. There was no reason why I should stay there and do his work, but I saw that the furnace needed another charge, so I stepped across and took hold of the handles of the car, thinking to dump it and close the furnace.

Then two hands seized mine—and, man, *I saw them!* . . . Disembodied hands, clawlike, brown and shriveled, with each bone showing through the papery, dark skin. They clutched my wrists, holding me fast while they forced the barrow and me along with it toward the open door where the white-hot hell-fire raged. . . .

I struggled while the car trundled slowly, jerkily, straight toward the fury of the fire. The gripping hands dug dark nails into my wrists. . . . I have the scars yet. Look! You see them? Ten white crescents that I shall always carry. . . .

The barrow moved faster and I felt a cold breath on my cheek in spite of the searing heat from the open furnace. For a second I looked over my shoulder into the eye-sockets of a mummied head with skin drawn thin and tight over the bones; coarse, harsh hair brushed me. . . . I saw it, felt it—yes. . . . The barrow tipped.

I slid with it—down. . . .

You have guessed, of course, that Preston returned to the platform just in time to grab me as I fell.

A wave of unconsciousness swept over me. When I opened my eyes I was flat on my back panting like a branded steer and Preston was examining my bleeding wrists. The workmen from various parts of the building had gathered near, and one of them said, in his slurred, rapid Spanish: "Those wounds never came from the car. The *patrón* has had dealings with a spirit!" He spoke with the surety, the finality of an Indian who sees and knows, perhaps, more than we foreigners do.

Just then Kellogg, the lad in charge of the 7-to-3 o'clock shift, came along fresh from his bed and breakfast; so Preston was free to get me back to the mess-house.

But after we were away from the furnaces I refused to go to my room. I told him everything—"and I've got to get that thing back to its body—now!" I finished.

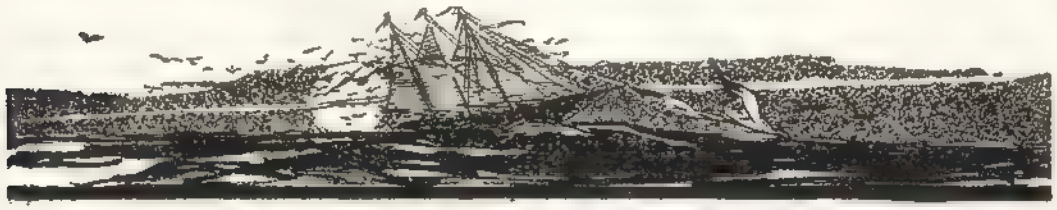
He was a good sport; he did not laugh as many a man might have done, although I think that I could have killed him if he had sneered. No, he looked at me, nodded and remarked quietly: "I saw something behind you as you came up the steps." He put his arm through mine and without another word we went to the corral; he had his own horse saddled and chose a fresh mount for me. The bags he took care of himself, remarking as he picked them up: "You can not have those relics, old man."

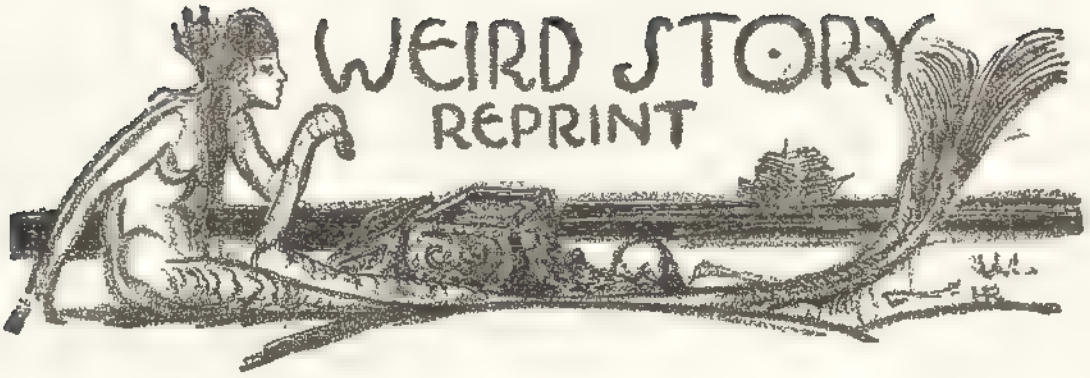
Together we rode back to Chiu-Chiu. I no longer felt that there was something behind me; the thing, whatever it was, moved at my side, waiting.

It did not have to wait long. The horses were fresh and we arrived at Chiu-Chiu before noon, making a wide circuit around the oasis to avoid curious villagers.

Back on the shoulders I put the head of that seated Thing and I replaced each piece of trash I had pilfered. Then we covered the mummy from the light of day. The sand was smooth when we had finished. . . .

That's all. I've never had a haunted feeling since; being a practical man I won't either, for I shall never again disturb a dead man. No, never again.





Lindenborg Pool

By WILLIAM MORRIS

I READ once in lazy humor Thorpe's *Northern Mythology,* on a cold May night when the north wind was blowing; in lazy humor, but when I came to the tale that is here amplified there was something in it that fixed my attention and made me think of it; and whether I would or no, my thoughts ran in this way, as here follows.

So I felt obliged to write, and wrote accordingly, and by the time I had done the gray light filled all my room; so I put out my candles, and went to bed, not without fear and trembling, for the morning twilight is so strange and lonely. This is what I wrote.

YES, on that dark night, with that wild unsteady north wind howling, though it was Maytime, it was doubtless dismal enough in the forest, where the boughs clashed eerily, and where, as the wanderer in that place hurried along, strange forms half showed themselves to him, the more fearful because half seen in that way: dismal enough doubtless on wide moors where the great wind had it all its own way: dismal on the rivers creeping on and on between the marshlands, creeping through the willows, the water trickling through the locks, sounding faintly in the gusts of the wind.

Yet surely nowhere so dismal as by the side of that still pool.

I threw myself down on the ground there, utterly exhausted with my struggle against the wind, and with bearing the fathoms and fathoms of the heavily leaded plumb-line that lay beside me.

Fierce as the wind was, it could not raise the leaden waters of that fearful pool, defended as they were by the steep banks of dripping yellow clay, striped horribly here and there with ghastly uncertain green and blue.

They said no man could fathom it; and yet all round the edges of it grew a rank crop of dreary reeds and segs, some round, some flat, but none ever flowering as other things flowered, never dying and being renewed, but always the same stiff array of unbroken reeds and segs, some round, some flat. Hard by me were two trees leafless and ugly, made, it seemed, only for the wind to go through with a wild sough on such nights as these; and for a mile from that place were no other trees.

True, I could not see all this at that time, then, in the dark night, but I knew well that it was all there; for much had I studied this pool in the daytime, trying to learn the secret of it; many hours I had spent there, happy with a kind of happiness, because forgetful of the past. And even now, could I not hear the wind going through those trees, as it never went through any trees before or since? could I not see gleams of the dismal moor? could I not hear those reeds just taken by the wind, knocking against each other, the flat ones scraping all along the round ones? Could I not hear the slow trickling of the land-springs through the clay banks?

The cold, chill horror of the place was too much for me; I had never been there by night before, nobody had for quite a long time, and now to come on such a night! If there had been any moon, the place would have looked more as it did by day; besides, the moon shining on water is always so beautiful, on any water even: if it had been starlight, one could have looked at the stars and thought of the time when those fields were fertile and beautiful (for such a time was, I am sure), when the cowslips grew among the grass, and when there was promise of yellow-waving corn stained with poppies; that time which the stars had seen, but which we had never seen, which even they would never see again—past time!

Ah! what was that which touched my shoulder?—Yes, I see, only a dead leaf.—Yes, to be here on this eighth of May too of all nights in the year, the night of that awful day when ten years ago I slew him, not undeservedly, God knows, yet how dreadful it was!—Another leaf! and another!—Strange, those trees have been dead this hundred years, I should think. How sharp the wind is, too, just as if I were moving along and meeting it;—why, I *am* moving! what then, I am not there after all; where am I then? there are the trees; no, they are freshly planted oak saplings, the very ones that those withered last-year's leaves were blown on me from.

I have been dreaming then, and am on my road to the lake; but what a young wood! I must have lost my way; I never saw all this before. Well—I will walk on stoutly.

May the Lord help my senses! I am *riding!*—on a mule; a bell tinkles somewhere on him; the wind blows something about with a flapping sound: something? in Heaven's name, what? *My* long black robes.—Why—when I left my house I was clad in serviceable broadcloth of the Nineteenth Century.

I shall go mad—I am mad—I am gone to the Devil—I have lost my identity; who knows in what place, in what age of the world I am living now? Yet I will be calm; I have seen all these things before, in pictures surely, or something like them. I am resigned, since it is no worse than that. I am a priest then, in the dim, far-off Thirteenth Century, riding, about midnight, to carry the blessed sacrament to some dying man.

Soon I found that I was not alone; a man was riding close to me on a horse; he was fantastically dressed, more so than usual for that time, being striped all over in vertical stripes of yellow and green, with quaint birds like exaggerated storks in different attitudes counterchanged on the stripes; all this I saw by the lantern he carried, in the light of which his debauched black eyes quite flashed. On he went, unsteadily rolling, very drunk, though it was the Thirteenth Century, but he sat his horse fairly well.

I watched him in my proper Nineteenth Century character, with insatiable curiosity and intense amusement; but as a quiet priest of a long-past age, with contempt and disgust enough, not unmixed with fear and anxiety.

He roared out snatches of doggerel verse as he went along, drinking-songs, hunting-songs, robbing-songs, lust-songs, in a voice that sounded far and far above the roaring of the wind, though that was high, and rolled along the dark road that his lantern cast spikes of light along ever so far, making the devils grin: and meanwhile I, the priest, glanced from him wrathfully every now and then to That which I carried very reverently in my hand, and my blood curdled with shame and indignation; but being a shrewd priest, I knew well enough that a sermon would be utterly thrown away on a man who was drunk every day in the year, and, more especially, very drunk then. So I held my peace, saying only under my breath:

"Dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus. Corrupti sunt et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis; non est qui faciat bonum non est usque ad unum: sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum, linguis suis dolose agebant, venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum. Dominum non invocaverunt; illic trepidaverunt timore, ubi non erat timor. Quis dabit ex Sion salutare Israel?"

and so I went on, thinking too at times about the man who was dying and whom I was soon to see; he had been a bold bad plundering baron, but was said lately to have altered his way of life, having seen a miracle or some such thing; he had departed to keep a tournament near his castle lately, but had been brought back sore wounded, so this drunken servant, with some difficulty and much unseasonable merriment, had made me understand, and now lay at the point of death, brought about by unskilful tending and such like. Then I thought of his face—a bad face, very bad, retreating forehead, small twinkling eyes, projecting lower jaw; and such a voice, too, he had! like the grunt of a boar mostly.

Now don't you think it strange that this face should be the same, actually the same as the face of my enemy, slain that very day ten years ago? I did not hate him, either that man or the baron, but I wanted to see as little of him as possible, and I hoped that the ceremony would soon be over, and that I should be at liberty again.

And so with these thoughts and many others, but all thought strangely double, we went along, the varlet being too drunk to take much notice of me, only once, as he was singing some doggerel, like this, I think, making allowances for change of language and so forth:

"The Duke went to Treves
On the first of November;
His wife stay'd at Bonn—
Let me see, I remember;

"When the Duke came back
To look for his wife,
We came from Cologne,
And took the Duke's life;

"We hung him mid-high
Between spire and pavement,
From their mouths dropp'd the cabbage
Of the carles in amazement."

"Boo—hoo! Church-rat! Church-mouse! Hilloa, Priest! have you brought the pyx, eh?"

From some cause or other he seemed to think this an excellent joke, for he almost shrieked with laughter as he went along; but by this time we had reached the castle. Challenge, and counter-challenge, and we passed the outermost gate and began to go through some of the courts, in which stood lime-trees here and there, growing green tenderly with that May-time, though the wind bit keenly.

How strange again! as I went farther, there seemed no doubt of it; here in the aftertime came that pool, how I knew not; but in the few moments that we were riding from the outer gate to the castle-porch I thought so intensely over the probable cause for the existence of that pool, that (how strange!) I could almost have thought I was back again listening to the oozing of the land-springs through the high clay banks there. I was wakened from that, before it grew too strong, by the glare

of many torches, and, dismounting, found myself in the midst of some twenty attendants, with flushed faces and wildly sparkling eyes, which they were vainly trying to soften to due solemnity; mock solemnity I had almost said, for they did not seem to think it necessary to appear really solemn, and had difficulty enough apparently in not prolonging indefinitely the shout of laughter with which they had at first greeted me. "Take the holy Father to my Lord," said one at last, "and we will go with him."

So they led me up the stairs into the gorgeously furnished chamber; the light from the heavy waxen candles was pleasant to my eyes after the glare and twisted red smoke of the pine-torches; but all the essences scattered about the chamber were not enough to conquer the fiery breath of those about me.

I PUT on the alb and stole they brought me, and, before I went up to the sick man, looked round on those that were in the rooms; for the rooms opened one into the other by many doors, across some of which hung gorgeous tapestry; all the rooms seemed to have many people, for some stood at these doors, and some passed to and fro, swinging aside the heavy hangings; once several people at once, seemingly quite by accident, drew aside almost all the veils from the doors, and showed an endless perspective of gorgeousness.

And at these things my heart fainted for horror. "Had not the Jews of late," thought I, the priest, "been very much in the habit of crucifying children in mockery of the Holiest, holding gorgeous feasts while they beheld the poor innocents die? these men are Atheists, you are in a trap, yet quit yourself like a man."

"Ah, sharp one," thought I, the author, "where are you at last? try to pray as a test.—Well, well, these things are strangely like devils.—O man, you have talked about bravery often, now is your time to practise it: once for all trust in God, or I fear you are lost."

Moreover it increased my horror that there was no appearance of a woman in all these rooms; and yet was there not? there, those things—I looked more intently; yes, no doubt they were women, but all dressed like men;—what a ghastly place!

"O man! do your duty," my angel said; then in spite of the bloodshot eyes of man and woman there, in spite of their bold looks, they quailed before me.

I stepped up to the bedside, where under the velvet coverlid lay the dying man, his small sparkling eyes only (but dulled now by coming death) showing above the swathings. I was about to kneel down by the bedside to confess him, when one of those—things—called out (now they had just been whispering and sniggering together, but the priest in his righteous, brave scorn would not look at them; the humbled author, half fearful, half trustful, dared not): so one called out:

"Sir Priest, for three days our master has spoken no articulate word; you must pass over all particulars; ask for a sign only."

Such a strange ghastly suspicion flashed across me just then; but I choked it, and asked the dying man if he repented of his sins, and if he believed all that was necessary to salvation, and, if so, to make a sign, if he were able: the man moved a little and groaned; so I took it for a sign, as he was clearly incapable either of speaking or moving, and accordingly began the service for the administration of the sacraments; and as I began, those behind me and through all the rooms (I know it was through all of them) began to move about, in a bewildering dance-like motion, mazy and intricate; yes, and presently music struck up through all those rooms, music and singing, lively and gay; many of the tunes I had

heard before (in the Nineteenth Century); I could have sworn to half a dozen of the polkas.

The rooms grew fuller and fuller of people; they passed thick and fast between the rooms, and the hangings were continually rustling; one fat old man with a big belly crept under the bed where I was, and wheezed and chuckled there, laughing and talking to one who stooped down and lifted up the hangings to look at him.

Still more and more people talking and singing and laughing and twirling about, till my brain went round and round, and I scarce knew what I did; yet, somehow, I could not leave off: I dared not even look over my shoulder, lest I should see something so horrible as to make me die.

So I got on with the service, and at last took the pyx, and took thereout the sacred wafer, whereupon was a deep silence through all those rooms, which troubled me, I think, more than all which had gone before, for I knew well it did not mean reverence.

I held it up, that which I counted so holy, when lo! great laughter, echoing like thunder-claps through all the rooms, not dulled by the veiling hangings, for they were all raised up together, and, with a slow upheaval of the rich clothes among which he lay, with a sound that was half snarl, half grunt, with helpless body swathed in bedclothes, a huge *swine* that I had been shriving tore from me the Holy Thing, deeply scoring my hand as he did so with tusk and tooth, so that the red blood ran on to the floor.

Therewithal he rolled down on to the floor, and lay there helplessly, only able to roll to and fro, because of the swathings.

Then right madly skirled the intolerable laughter, rising to shrieks that were fearfuller than any scream of agony I ever heard; the hundreds of people through all those grand rooms danced and wheeled about me, shrieking, hemming me in with interlaced arms, the women loosing their long hair and thrusting forward their horribly grinning unsexed faces toward me till I felt their hot breath.

Oh! how I hated them all! almost hated all mankind for their sakes; how I longed to get right quit of all men; among whom, as it seemed, all sacredest things even were made a mock of. I looked about me fiercely; I sprang forward, and clutched a sword from the gilded belt of one of those who stood near me; with savage blows that threw the blood about the gilded walls and their hangings right over the heads of those—things—I cleared myself from them, and tore down the great stairs madly, yet could not, as in a dream, go fast enough, because of my passion.

I was out in the courtyard, among the lime-trees soon, the north wind blowing freshly on my heated forehead in that dawn. The outer gate was locked and bolted; I stooped and raised a great stone and sent it at the lock with all my strength, and I was stronger than ten men then; iron and oak gave way before it, and through the ragged splinters I tore in reckless fury, like a wild horse through a hazel hedge.

And no one had pursued me. I knelt down on the dear green turf outside, and thanked God with streaming eyes for my deliverance, praying Him forgiveness for my unwilling share in that night's mockery.

Then I arose and turned to go, but even as I did so I heard a roar as if the world were coming in two, and looking toward the castle, saw, not a castle, but a great cloud of white lime-dust swaying this way and that in the gusts of the wind.

Then while the east grew bright there arose a hissing, gurgling noise, that swelled into the roar and wash of many waters, and by then the sun had risen a deep black lake lay before my feet.

And this is how I tried to fathom the Lindenborg Pool.

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 582)

Writes Mrs. Edith Beadle, of Princeton, Indiana: "I wish to say a word of praise for Derleth; his *Old Mark* is the best story I have ever read in WEIRD TALES. It is a perfect weird tale. Let us have more occult stories. I like all the stories I find in WEIRD TALES, though, but I do not like a tale to stick too closely to reality and plausibility such as one reader praises so highly in this issue. Let the imagination have full play, I say; we have plenty of other magazines that print only real and plausible stories."

"I must say that you publish the most brain-awakening, hair-exercising magazine I have ever read," writes Bill Griffey, of Louisville, Kentucky. "This is true of your WEIRD TALES or I would not read it."

A. V. Pershing, of Indianapolis, writes to the Eyrie: "I have read several of the finest stories in the new September issue, but I have only just now gorged myself with "*the*" perfect horror tale: *The Hound*, by H. P. Lovecraft. Although I am still dazed, as my recovery from the frigid embrace of this charnel nightmare is not yet complete, I wish humbly to thank Mr. Lovecraft for his power to loose one from the chains of the commonplace to roam with sweet horror amid the shadowy throngs which grope their tortured ways through the endless corridors of Eternity—without place, without time, without purpose—free from the mirage of present-day actuality."

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue of WEIRD TALES? *The White Wizard*, by Sophie Wenzel Ellis, and *Trespassing Souls*, by Seabury Quinn, are tied for first place in the September issue as the current number goes to press.

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE NOVEMBER WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)_____	_____
(2)_____	_____
(3)_____	_____

I do not like the following stories:

(1)_____	Why? _____
(2)_____	_____

It will help us to know what kind of stories you want in Weird Tales if you will fill out this coupon and mail it to The Eyrie, Weird Tales, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Reader's name and address:

_____

_____

_____

The Gray Killer

(Continued from page 599)

nature of our people. We have grown mighty in knowledge while retaining habits common on Earth only to the most primitive races. Cannibalism is practised universally on Horil. The Devil-God loves human sacrifice and the slaying of men and women. Hence the Devil-God came to haunt the altars of Horil, its temples and the hearts of its men and women. You of Earth would say that evil attracts evil.

And for eleven centuries I was Its high priest. On Horil the only death comes by way of cannibalism, or an occasional suicide, since we have done away with accidental death. Yet, sooner or later, men on Horil die. It is one's turn to furnish food for others, or life grows weary—so does life equalize itself among those who might otherwise become immortal; balancing knowledge and character of destructive traits, perhaps, that the eternal plan of the great Unknown be not thwarted. . . .

But this is not to the point.

At last I offended the Devil-God. I stole from his altar—well, she was beautiful, and the gray pallor of her skin was like the early dawn-light. Love is rare on Horil—but it had me in its grip.

After I had loosed her from the altar we dared not go into the City—she would have been returned to the altar, and I should have furnished a feast for the royal family. We fled into the barren places. And the Devil-God, returning to Its altar, saw us and overtook us in a great, empty, stony field. There *she*, the beloved, was seized and devoured before my eyes. And I——

No such mercy was intended for the faithless high priest of the altar of human sacrifice. I was caught up—gently—in one of the monster tentacles. The wide, barren plain lit by

12 Novels for $1.00

These are copyright novels by well known writers. Printed on good paper with illustrated covers.

Thrilling Mystery Fiction!

Each of these books is an exciting mystery or detective story. Guaranteed to hold your interest.

And you get the entire set of twelve novels for only one dollar! There is no other charge.

But—you must act immediately! The supply is limited. Right now, while you think of it, tear out this advertisement, fill in the coupon below, and return to us with $1.00 (coin, stamps or money order). The complete set of twelve novels will be mailed to you promptly, postage prepaid.

POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING CO.,
Dept. 55, 840 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1.00. Send me the twelve novels, postage prepaid, at once. This $1.00 is payment in full.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

White Magic
and Its Laws

A Remarkable Book LOANED To All Seekers For Power

Whatever you imagine the power of Black Magic may be, remember there is a pure WHITE MAGIC which is as potent for good.

With the higher occult laws and secrets of mystical power you can change the course of your life and attract SUCCESS, HEALTH, HAPPINESS and a development of mental foresight that will astound you and surprise your friends.

The Rosicrucians were the Master Mystics in all ages and today they are organized in Lodges, groups and colleges in all parts of the world. In their teachings they secretly preserve the ancient wisdom that made the Pyramid in Egypt the marvel of today and the mystery temples of Greece the most alluring places of strange achievements.

You may share in this great knowledge if you are more than a mere seeker for mystery and magic. If you really desire to master the arcane, occult knowledge of the Masters, step by step, and become a true Adept of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, you may have the doorway opened to you.

The Rosicrucian teachings containing the true knowledge of the mystics are never published in books. But you may borrow a book called "The Light of Egypt," in which the strange story of the Rosicrucians is told and an explanation of how you may have the private teachings of the Rosicrucian Fraternity in America.

Unless you are truly sincere and anxious to gradually become developed in a superior manner, do not ask for this book. Address (not on post card):

Librarian H. W. M.

AMORC TEMPLE

Rosicrucian Park

SAN JOSE CALIF.

STEAMSHIP POSITIONS — MEN, WOMEN. Good pay. Experience Unnecessary. List of positions free. W. E. Arculus, Mount Vernon, N. Y.

LET ME READ YOUR CHARACTER FROM your handwriting. Sample reading 12c. Graphologist, 2309-CU Lawrence, Toledo, O.

FOR 1929 NUMEROLOGICAL FORECAST, SEND 20c and birth date. Martha Sanchez, 820 Howard St., Detroit, Mich. Detailed forecast $1.00

SONG POEM WRITERS—"REAL" PROPOSITION. Hibbeler, D-156, 3104 N. Keystone, Chicago.

the cold stars fell away beneath me—shrunk to the size of a handkerchief. An entire hemisphere of Horil lay like a saucer holding the sky—then shrank too, and fell away. My senses left me, and the breath of my nostrils. Then——

I was lying in a field on the planet Earth, which I soon recognized by the customs and types of its inhabitants, from my knowledge of schoolroom astronomy. How did I survive the journey through space? Who knows? Ask of the Devil-God, Which has—perhaps—no words for all Its knowledge.

I would not starve—I, an eater of human flesh. But here another thing must be explained. On Horil we prepare human flesh for consumption. Countless centuries ago our epicures evolved a taste for the flesh of leprous persons. Through constant usage, we have come to eat no other flesh—and by some physiological idiosyncrasy, our stomachs became unadapted to other flesh. I can eat non-leprous flesh—but it inflicts on me fearful pangs of nausea.

Our biologists, then, developed a specific which implants a swift-growing culture of leprosy in any flesh into which it is injected—and which at the same time cures and restores all bodily tissues suffering from any other injury. So our health is safeguarded. And hence the cure of the man in 26, and the woman in 19, who had cancer. Hence the sudden development of leprosy in these patients. For they were to give me needed food.

Hence, the buried and mutilated body in the sand. I was starving, famished.

The sacrifices on the roof altar, on the other hand, were sacrifices of propitiation; but the improvised "fish-hooks"——

I madly hoped to snare the Devil-God I served—as men on Earth of primitive tribes, so I have heard, turn upside down the images of their saints to force them to their bidding. But I

dared more—hoping literally to hook the monster with steel barb and cable.

Two sacrifices It scorned.

Driven by hunger, I had prepared my necessary feast. The girl with deep blue eyes that grew sad and terrified as they gazed on me was my first selection. Obedient to a true instinct, however, she shunned me. So I prepared the man and woman for myself—and sacrificed the children.

Then a new thought came to me. My sacrifices had been too small. They should have matched my own necessity. I determined to raise once more an altar on the roof, and to fasten to it the slain body of the girl with the sad terrified eyes.

I crept upon her as she slept at last a sleep so deep that the sense of my nearness failed to rouse her, as it had done before. I gagged her and carried her from her room, half smothering her as her sad eyes implored. Even to me, she was pitifully beautiful; the better to allure the Monster-God of Space.

I conveyed her—as she wrote down—to the operating-room, and strapped her to the table—leaving free her hands, since she had little strength and could not loose herself with her body fastened flat to the table, and I had need to hasten.

I offered up my prayers upon the roof—the prayers I had made before the altars of Horil through eleven centuries.

The Being—the Monster—swooped down out of the "empty" skies—the "empty" skies that teem with the Unseen and the Unknowable.

I hastened back from the roof, to the operating-room. I threw myself, knife in hand, upon the operating-table——

And I was seized from behind!

Miss Wurt at last had dared to give the alarm. No sacrifice was made upon the roof again. And I was taken

FREE 10 DAYS TRIAL
$1.50
INKOGRAPH
PENCIL POINTED PEN
Writes with ink smooth as a lead pencil on cheapest or finest paper, without miss, skip or blur. Won't blot, scratch or leak.
Makes 3 carbon copies at one time with original in ink. Anyone can use your Inkograph – hard pressure cannot spread or injure its 14 Kt. gold point. Patent automatic feed prevents point from clogging. No complicated mechanism. Best materials and workmanship. Fully Guaranteed.
Send No Money. Pay postman $1.50 plus postage. Sent prepaid if remittance accompanies order. Money back if dissatisfied in 10 days.
THE WRITING HEMISPHERE
THAT BALL-LIKE 14 KT GOLD POINT
INKOGRAPH CO. Inc. 161-152 Centre St., New York City
AGENTS
Send for Inkograph or FREE Sales plan booklet. Sells on sight—no investment.

Do you want to be

ATTRACTIVE?

If so, we can help you.

Send name and address at once for free literature.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF LIGHT
Dept. O, Box 1525, Los Angeles, Cal.

This BOOK 10¢

Explains many mystifying tricks with coins, cards, handkerchiefs, etc., you can do. Also contains complete catalog of Magic Tricks, Jokes, Puzzles, Escapes, Curios, and Imported Novelties from many Foreign lands. Large assortment, lowest prices. You will amaze and mystify your friends! Send 10c today.

LYLE DOUGLAS,
Station A-6 Dallas, Texas

Quit Tobacco

Don't try to banish unaided the hold tobacco has upon you. Thousands of inveterate tobacco users have, with the aid of the Keeley Treatment, found it easy to quit.

KEELEY TREATMENT FOR TOBACCO HABIT Quickly banishes craving for tobacco. Successful for over 50 years. Write today for FREE BOOK and our MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

KEELEY INSTITUTE, Dept. E-704, Dwight, Illinois

BOYS & GIRLS **Earn Xmas Money**

Write for 50 Sets St. Nicholas, Christmas Seals. Sell for 10c a set. When sold send us $3.00 and keep $2.00. No Work—Just Fun. ST. NICHOLAS SEAL CO., Dept. 410-W. T., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Your character and talents revealed by Numerology and Astrology. Send full name, age and birth date and $1.00 to

Leon Brittell
Ticonderoga, N. Y.

TOBACCO OR SNUFF HABIT CURED OR NO PAY

Any form, cigars, cigarettes, snuff, pipe, chewing. Full treatment on trial. Harmless. Costs $1.50 if cured, nothing if it fails. Over 500,000 treatments used. SUPERBA CO. NT-17, Baltimore, Md.

INVENTIONS WANTED — PATENTED, UNpatented. If you have an idea for sale, write Hartley, Box 928, Bangor, Maine.

captive—though soon I shall escape.

Comment by the Superintendent of R—— Hospital, signed before witnesses at the request of Dr. Rountree and Marion Wheaton.

THE "Confession" of the unknown man captured almost in the act of murdering Miss Wheaton upon an operating-table in our hospital is beyond credence.

Nevertheless, I hereby testify to two things. The Killer's entrances and exits were made through unnoticed back windows which were not near stairs or fire escapes. This was possible, because he *scaled* the walls of the building—not climbing them, but *walking up them.* When his shoes were removed, his feet appeared as long segments of the bodies of serpents—and they could grip and scale any kind of wall. His feet, he said, were as the feet of all "human" beings on Horil; and "on Earth" his shoes were made specially, and his feet were coiled within these shoes!

Likewise the manner of his suicide is beyond explanation. He had been searched and was guarded carefully, of course, and he died—simply by holding his breath. No living thing on Earth has been known to do this thing, since at a certain degree of weakness the will is replaced by automatic functions.

To the physiologic norm of no known species of Earth could the Killer conform.

NEXT MONTH

The Mystery of the Four Husbands

***By* GASTON LEROUX**

A VIVID weird mystery-story about a gloriously beautiful woman, her twelve suitors, and her four husbands who were mysteriously murdered, one after the other. A tale of the deadly tali-tali, the tropical poison that kills without leaving a trace; and the little pot-bellied African fetish with the fatal venom stored in his belly.

THIS new story by the author of the famous weird novel, "The Phantom of the Opera," adds another to the superb *contes d'horreur* by him which have appeared in this magazine. This enthralling story will be printed complete in the

December issue of

WEIRD TALES

On Sale November 1

Clip and Mail this coupon today!

WEIRD TALES
840 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $1 for special 5 months subscription to "Weird Tales" to begin with the December issue ($1.25 in Canada). Special offer void unless remittance is accompanied by coupon.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____

Coming Soon

The BIRD-PEOPLE

By
OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

Something new in weird-scientific tales—a fascinating story located in a different angle of vibration, eery monstrosities and strange adventures.

"She is Yours, Master!"

SICK at heart the trembling girl shuddered at the words that delivered her to this terrible fate of the East. How could she escape from this Oriental monster into whose hands she had been given—this mysterious man of mighty power whose face none had yet seen?

Here is an *extraordinary situation.* What was to be the fate of this beautiful girl? Who was this strange emissary whom no one really knew?

To know the answer to this and the most exciting tales of Oriental adventure and mystery ever told, read on through the most thrilling, absorbing, entertaining and fascinating pages ever written.

Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery

11 Superb Volumes by SAX ROHMER

Written with his uncanny knowledge of things Oriental

HERE you are offered no ordinary mystery stories. In these books the hidden secrets, mysteries and intrigues of the Orient fairly leap from the pages. Before your very eyes spreads a swiftly moving panorama that takes you breathless from the high places of society—from homes of refinement and luxury to sinister underworlds of London and the Far East—from Piccadilly and Broadway to incredible scenes behind idol temples in far off China—to the jungles of Malay, along strange paths to the very seat of Hindu sorcery.

11 Mystery Volumes Packed With Thrills!

Be the first in your community to own these, the most wonderful Oriental mystery stories ever published—books that have sold by the hundred thousand at much higher prices—books you will enjoy reading over and over again. Handsomely bound in substantial cloth covers, a proud adornment for your table or shelf.

These are the sort of stories that President Wilson, Roosevelt and other great men read to help them relax—to forget their burdens. To read these absorbing tales of the mysterious East is to cast your worries into oblivion—to increase your efficiency.

Priced for Quick Sale

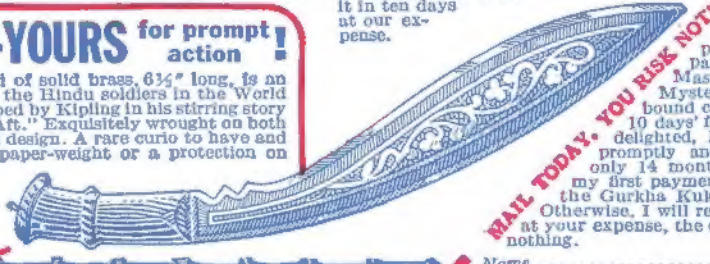
Printing these volumes by the hundred thousand when paper was cheap makes this low price possible. Only a limited number left. *Don't lose a minute!*

Complete Sets Free on Approval

You needn't send a cent. Simply mail the coupon and this amazing set will go to you immediately, all charges prepaid. If it fails to delight you, return it in ten days at our expense.

This rare PREMIUM-YOURS for prompt action!

This famous Gurkha Kukri of solid brass, 6¼" long, is an exact replica of that used by the Hindu soldiers in the World War and so graphically described by Kipling in his stirring story "The Drums of the Fore and Aft." Exquisitely wrought on both sides in an ancient symbolical design. A rare curio to have and useful as a letter-opener, a paper-weight or a protection on occasion. A limited quantity on hand will be given without added cost as a premium for promptness—but you must act today!



MAIL TODAY. YOU RISK NOTHING

Dept. 21 10-29

McKINLAY, STONE & MACKENZIE
114 E. 16th St., N. Y.

Please send me on approval, all charges prepaid, your special set of Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery, in 11 handsomely bound cloth volumes. If after 10 days' free examination I am delighted, I will send you $1.00 promptly and $1.00 a month for only 14 months; when you receive my first payment you are to send me the Gurkha Kukri without extra cost. Otherwise, I will return the set in 10 days at your expense, the examination to cost me nothing.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

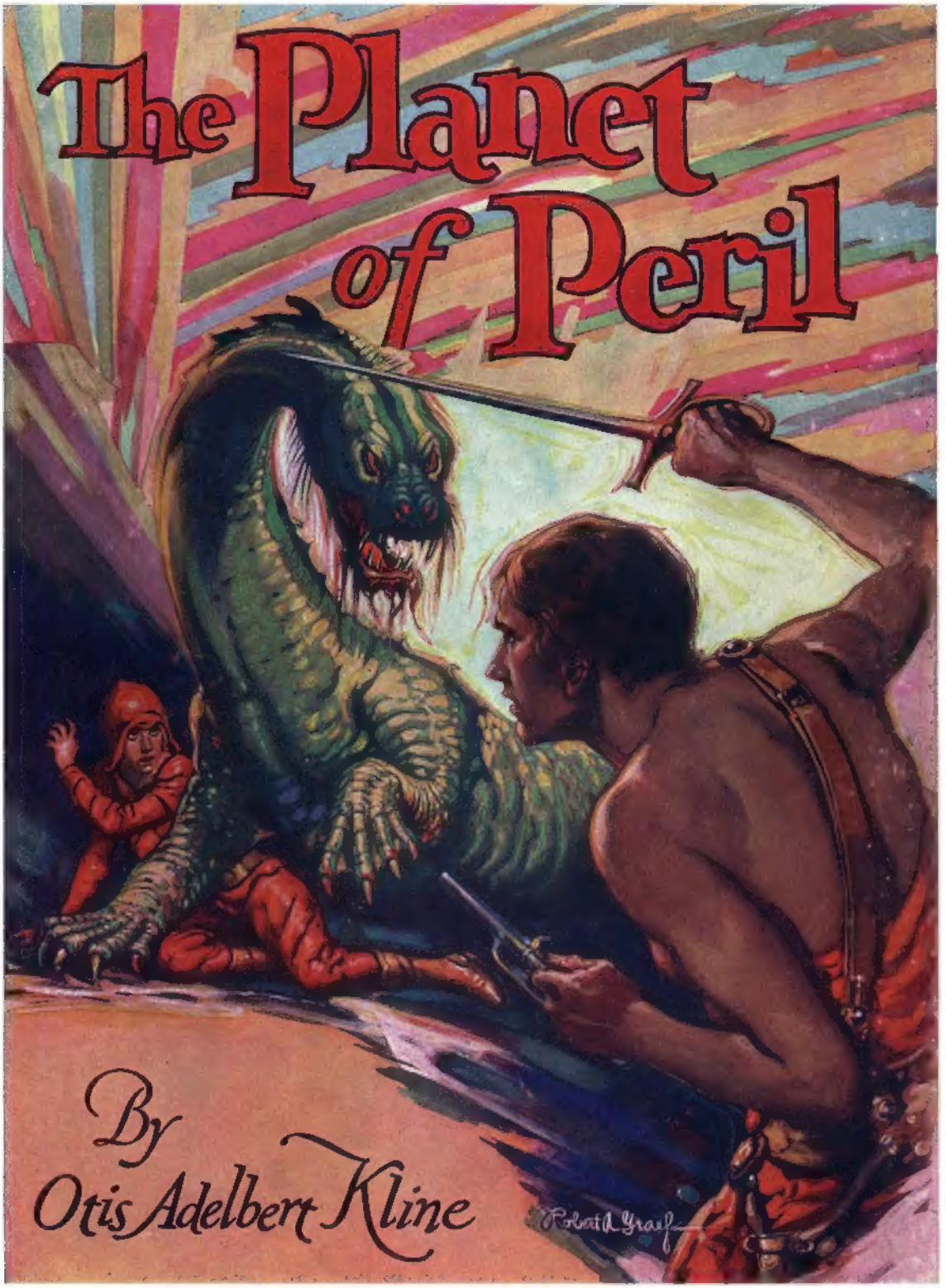
Age; Over 21?..... Under 21?.....

FOR CASH DEDUCT 5%

McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, Dept. 21, 114 E. 16th St., New York City, N. Y.

Here It Is! *The Strangest Story Ever Told*

Autographed First Edition



SPECIAL AUTOGRAPHED FIRST EDITION

While they last, get a copy of this special first edition, *autographed by the author*, at the price of the regular edition. Read the strange adventures of Robert Grandon, an American on the planet Venus, amid savage men, ferocious beasts, gigantic reptiles, enormous blood-sucking bats and other horrible animals, which follow in such quick succession that the interest in the story is at white heat all of the time. Send check, draft or money order for $2.00 at once and the book will be sent to you postpaid,

Popular Fiction Publishing Co., Dept. K-2, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago